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FIRST THINGS

March 1990
Number One

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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Paul Johnson

The Importance of Being Catholic:
A Protestant View
Stanley Hauerwas

Bioethics and the Holocaust
Richard John Neuhaus

The Return of the Catholic Whig
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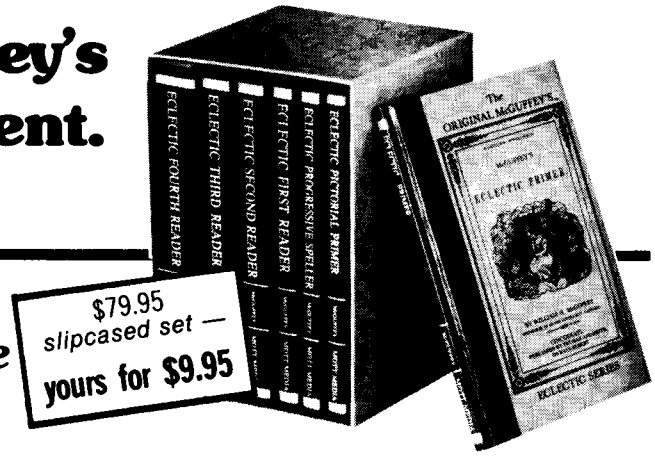

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

CORRESPONDENCE	2	*John Cardinal O'Connor, George Marsden, Paul Simon, Ronald J. Sider, John Silber, David Little, Steven Tipton, Robert L. Wilken, Midge Decter, Elizabeth Achtemeier, Mark A. Noll, William Armstrong, Martin E. Marty, John H. Leith, Edwin J. Feulner, Orrin G. Hatch*
EDITORIALS	7	Putting First Things First, Redefining Abortion Politics
OPINION	11	*Mary Ann Glendon* Reflections on the Flag-Burning Case, *David Novak* The Closed Mind of Arthur Schlesinger, *George Weigel* The Catholic Moment—Blocked, Botched, or Transformed? *Don Wycliff* A Culture of Poverty?
ARTICLES	18	*Paul Johnson* The Capitalism & Morality Debate
	23	*Stanley Hauerwas* The Importance of Being Catholic: A Protestant View
	31	*Richard John Neuhaus* Bioethics and the Holocaust
	38	*Michael Novak* The Return of the Catholic Whig
	43	*Amy Sherman* Christians and Economic Development
REVIEW ESSAY	51	*Russell Hittinger* Between Jews and Christians
BOOKS	55	*Robert Benne* Free Persons and the Common Good by Michael Novak; *John P. Sisk* Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Modern Age by Modris Ecksteins; *Ralph McInerny* Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy by George Weigel; *Paul Heyne* In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government by Charles Murray
THE PUBLIC SQUARE	65	A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life Poetry by *Anthony Kerrigan* (5, 17, and 64)

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Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Services: *Publishing Management Associates*

First Things (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Application to mail at second-class postage rate is pending in New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Things, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Editorial Offices: The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Editorial phone: (212) 627-1985. Advertising Offices: 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108 Advertising Phone: (815) 398-8569. Subscription Department: P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870.

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FIRST THINGS

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Setting the Agenda

(Editors' note: In order to inaugurate our correspondence section, we asked a number of people to respond briefly to the following question: "What are the most important issues in religion and public life that First Things *should address, and what advice would you give us for addressing them?" Herewith their responses.)*

The most important "issue" in religion and public life is the human person. We must once again recognize that we cannot meet any other challenge of our day until we come to believe in the worth, dignity, and sacredness of *every* human person. Unless we do so, we will ultimately destroy ourselves with contempt.

Only a restoration of our belief in the sacredness of every human person will allow us to renew our families, to be serious and effective in addressing problems of poverty, racism, homelessness, drugs, abortion, and discrimination of every kind. The gospel of Christ demands nothing less of us.

It is the sacred human person, made in the image and likeness of Almighty God, who deserves primary consideration in *all* issues addressed. Whether sociological, scientific, economic, political, or otherwise, whatever issues you choose to include in your publication, I urge you to stay focused on what these issues have to do with sacred human persons.

I have great hopes that First Things will keep this "first thing" first.

John Cardinal O'Connor
Archbishop of New York

The question that I would most like to see you address is that of how we can promote a greater role for religion in public life without having the religion become a bland religion-in-general. And if we should accomplish that, how do we avoid on the other hand religion taking the form of mutually exclusive absolutist claims?

Or if it is moral stances that are the bottom line when we promote religion in public life, who decides which moral stances (whether based on scriptures, traditions, or claims about natural law or natural rights, etc.) truly represent God's will for public life? Do we suppose that if all religious views are fairly represented in public debate some sort of consensus will emerge? Or, if not, are we in effect promoting more religiously based conflicts between opposed, non-negotiable positions? Or is there something in between?

George Marsden
Professor of the History of Christianity in America
Divinity School
Duke University

Among the issues I would hope you will address are these two:

First, because of the way we finance political campaigns in the United States, we are increasingly listening to the voices of those who are the most articulate financially. That is not only a danger for the body politic, that is also a danger for the church. How do religious organizations, in a practical way, continue to be a voice for the voiceless?

Second, the tradition of having some division between church and state in the United States is healthy. No one knows precisely where we draw the line because faith must be applied to life and because the state must defend freedom and opportunity for the church. But there is one major difference between political beliefs and religious dogma. In the world of politics, I know that I have to make compromises. It is essential to effect change. On a minor piece of legislation, I may not have to compromise anything, but on anything of significance, compromise is essential. However, compromise is a bad word in the field of theology; dogma does not recognize it as a virtue. But when the rigidities of dogma are applied to political life,

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sometimes the essential political compromises that have to be made cannot be made. Then we get into troubled waters.

Paul Simon
United States Senate

I hope you can accomplish at least two things. First, Godspeed in educating this society's secular intelligentsia about the fact not only that the society has, is, and will be overwhelmingly religious but also that it intends to insist on relating religious belief to public policy.

Second, given the fact that a pluralistic society needs some common language to articulate, critique, and defend its public policy, you need to help us all understand how individual faith traditions within the larger pluralism can both maintain the integrity of their own particular beliefs (and their application to public policy) as well as dialogue with others using the broader common language necessary for public policy debate.

I take for granted that you will try hard to get the facts straight and state the views of people you critique in such a way that they not only recognize themselves but agree that their strongest case has been articulated before it is refuted. Of course we live in this vale of tears, where, as the Blessed Martin said, we are *simul justus et peccator*. But the effort is important.

Finally, I wish First Things would include, alongside its own analysis, one regular feature where a wide variety of people who disagree sharply would be invited to articulate a divergent perspective.

Ronald J. Sider
Professor of Theology and Culture
Eastern Baptist
Theological Seminary
Executive Director, Evangelicals for
Social Action and Just/Life

The intellectually shallow relativism that pervades our society shapes not only beliefs but policies. Into the relativistic vacuum of our society have surged laws, regulations, and court-mandated "solutions," many of which show how our political life has become divorced from our religious and ethical tradition. It is essential, in my view, that those who take that tradition seriously accept the task of demonstrating that it is still intellectually and morally compelling, and that its fundamental teachings are a prerequisite for the existence of civilized society. Paradoxically, only when contemporary religious life is "depoliticized" can it fulfill its appropriate "political" function.

Congratulations on First Things: you've chosen to labor in a vineyard that needs a lot of pruning.

John Silber
President
Boston University

There is in my opinion no more important subject regarding the relation of religion and public life in the contemporary world than the issue of religious and ideological discrimination and persecution. The efforts at nation-building among developing countries are typically defined in religious terms. One communion gains political advantage over another and the predictable result is intercommunal strife.

The subject also has the deepest relevance to developments in the Communist world. The connection between religion and nationalism apparent within the Soviet Union and among Eastern Bloc countries puts considerable pressure on traditional Communist attitudes toward organized religion.

Finally, "first-world" inhabitants are compelled to reflect on their own history and experience in the light of this problem. Are the various patterns of separating religion and public life arrived at in the modern democracies normative for the world community? Or do these patterns themselves subtly discriminate against certain forms of religion, as is frequently claimed?

David Little
Department of Religion
University of Virginia

The aim of throwing light on "first things" in matters of religion and public life is worthy of note, precisely because we take these things so much for granted in formulaic and partisan terms that do not prove true to the complexity of tradition or the demands of the present moment. So the formula of "separation of church and state" as institutional bodies, each governed by its own members, fails to reveal the moral dialogue between religion and politics which shapes the soul of public life. We need to deepen this dialogue not only in relation to the state, but in the practice of our self-governance as a people within a polity which extends beyond the state it underlies. For such reasons I look forward to First Things, particularly when I have the pleasure of arguing with its contributors.

Steven Tipton
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

I like the sound of the title of this new journal First Things. It reminds me of Origen of Alexandria, the mighty Christian intellectual who lived in the third century. His most important book was called *First Principles* and in it he addressed the great questions that arose out of the encounter between the young Christian movement and the collective wisdom of Greece and Rome. The discussion ranged over many topics—the moral life, cosmology, history, providence, anthropology, the interpretation of the Bible, in short questions that were prompted by the interaction of religion and Greco-Roman culture. In First Things I expect to see a continuation of this discussion within the context of American life and culture.

Robert L. Wilken
Commonwealth Professor of the
History of Christianity
University of Virginia

We are nowadays being forced to speak in the language of public life—indeed, to conduct political debate—about things that people who live in a proper relation to the universe once took for granted, such as, what is human, what is life, and what are

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our "rights" over it? We are, you might say, a society in the throes of a nervous breakdown. The most important thing a magazine in religion and public life can do, then, is guide people—as gently or as sternly as the occasion requires—to see the implications of using the language of Caesar on that which belongs to God.

Midge Decter
Executive Director
Committee for the Free World

I hope that FIRST THINGS will address, in depth, the educational failure of the church. There is now no one biblical story that church members know or to which they look for the norm of their faith and practice. Instead, church bureaucrats try to give authoritative guidance to the church through their pronouncements and programs, or individuals consider themselves laws unto themselves. The church wanes and fragments, without influence in society; ideologies rule the day; preachers often proclaim merely psychological therapy; ethics becomes a matter of personal opinion; and the church's "light to the world" goes out. We need to investigate the cause of this failure and to seek its correction.

Elizabeth Achtemeier
Union Theological Seminary
in Virginia

FIRST THINGS would be of greatest help if it could pursue conceptual clarity instead of partisan one-upmanship, if it could promote Christian insight about America instead of "American Christianity," if it could encourage a longing for reality instead of a satisfaction with the image. No religiously inspired commentor on public affairs has ever found it easy to be as wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove. Few who move back and forth between the pulpit and the political marketplace have done well at sorting out allegiances between God and Caesar. Only an occasional reformer has paused to think what it means for the Bible to contain both the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse of St. John. If you can produce a journal that advances faith by a judicious explanation of its public importance while strengthening public life by a realistic assessment of its traditional religious foundations, FIRST THINGS will be read with appreciation well beyond the precincts usually defined by partisanship, nationalistic filiopietism, and the anesthetizing image.

Mark A. Noll
Professor of History
Wheaton College

There is such a long list of issues and concerns that needs to be addressed that it's hard to know which first things to put first.

Personally, I am eager to read some thoughtful commentary on how believers can turn the tide of secularization in America while remaining faithful to traditional American concepts of religious freedom ... on how the church can influence the political process and help set America's national agenda without getting so mixed up in political things that it is corrupted or, even worse, that the mantle of Christ is thrown over secular issues ... about how Christians can help to heal the deep and painful wounds resulting from the abortion battle. These are a few of the issues that need serious attention and careful analysis.

William L. Armstrong
United States Senate

The most important issue in religion-and-public-life, in my view, has to do with keeping the republic itself alive and healthy. This means assuring that the conversation about the common weal be lively, that the faith-dimension and the voice of religious institutions and people be assured and respected, that the diversity foreseen in *The Federalist Paper Ten* be guaranteed its place even as editors and writers look for the "cohesive settlement" which, a Supreme Court justice once said, was the ultimate foundation of a free society. Religion exists not just for a republic: its civic role does not include making sad hearts glad, saving souls, or offering final meaning in life. But religious communities exist also for the republic, and they need encouragement in assessing the terms for that contribution.

Martin E. Marty
The Divinity School
University of Chicago

The most important issue that I think we have to face in American civil life is the viability of democracy in a society in which there is less and less consensus and less and less memory of the history that produced our democratic institutions. The most serious question in the life of the church is now, as always, the question of faith, "Who do you say that I am?" Those who have gathered, built, and sent forth churches have always answered with Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The most important question in the life of the church is the identification and integrity of the church's faith.

John H. Leith
Mary Elizabeth Pemberton
Professor of Theology
Union Theological Seminary
in Virginia

I can think of a series of questions which could be addressed in FIRST THINGS:

What do the great religions say about the responsibility of communities to help the needy and, conversely, the responsibility of the needy to minimize their dependence on others?

Under what circumstances is it just to use, or threaten to use, military force?

How important are the private lives of public figures in assessing their fitness for office?

What do the great religions say about proper business behavior?

What do the great religions say about man's stewardship of the earth?

Edwin J. Feulner, Jr.
President
The Heritage Foundation

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Not long ago, I addressed a national organization of criminal trial lawyers. During the question and answer period, one of the leading criminal trial lawyers in the country said, "I get so tired of you people in Washington because your only answer to the drug problem is more jail cells. We have to get back to the core values and create more social programs to solve this problem."

I pointed out to him that the President's anti-drug program centered on far more than law enforcement and was, in fact, quite comprehensive. Then I said, "More social programs are necessary but they are not the 'core values.' We have to get back to the family, including the teaching of basic moral and ethical values in our society." He agreed, as did most of the lawyers in attendance.

Therefore, I suggest that First Things spend some time addressing this problem of "core values" and how we can bolster the family.

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate

First Things *welcomes letters to the editor on matters pertaining to the journal and its contents. All letters are subject to editing for brevity and clarity.*

GOD'S AFFABLE PRINCIPLE OF COHESION

I

Merely the look of it, buttercup
at the edge of the "Lawn Falls"
where the water seeps, sweeps
down to the seaside
is enough to carry the viewer
in awe over the edge of reason
to a logic beyond the modest mundane:
the rocks being pitted are jointed
by torrents of balm-like uproar.
Love's principle's chaos
is as bound as lurid hurricane's
seeming disorder in order.
Fall, waters! Fall in disparate cohesion!

II

Wherever there is a Fan-Fall
there is luxury, calm, the voluptuary
of eddy's reflective surcease
in the face of passion's impulse.
The sigh exhortatively exclaims
To The Fan-Falls along the sedge
and Gulf-Stream edging of ferns
and, walking through the Valley
of the Shadow of Wealth's trees
by the side of a sometime invisible
rim of stairs in lax awe,
everyman and consort are unhalved
made whole in the face of disparate cohesion!

Anthony Kerrigan

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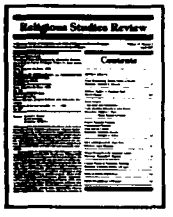

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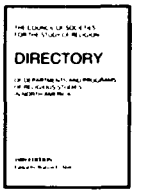

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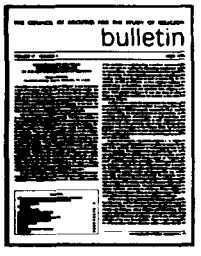

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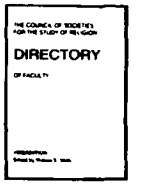

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FIRST THINGS
MARCH, 1990

Putting First Things First

"When in the course of human events..." Thus Jefferson and his associates, evincing a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind," began their explanation of what they were up to. To be sure, launching a new journal is not on a par with launching a new nation. Nor do we have any illusions that the whole of mankind will be paying attention to what we are up to here. But a decent respect for the opinion of those who do notice calls for a word of explanation.

This is a statement of editorial prejudices. Prejudices, rightly understood, are prior judgments. They are the considered assumptions that frame what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. We would be very unhappy if anyone thought us entirely open-minded. Our judgment that this or that is true and important inescapably prejudices us against judgments to the contrary.

At the same time, we do not expect that all our readers will share our prejudices. If everyone shared our prejudices, there would be neither purpose nor pleasure in launching a journal. Nor will our considered assumptions—about religion, public life, politics, economics, moral discourse, the arts, and how the world works—be evident in every article. Indeed, the purpose and pleasure of a journal is in engaging alternative assumptions.

Our prejudices will decide the arguments worth making, not the conclusions that writers reach. We fully expect that among our writers and readers will be believing Jews and Christians, agnostics, atheists, the politically liberal and conservative (with all the sub-categories attending both), and people with wildly divergent views of the civilization of which we are part. One thing we expect they will have in common, however. They are people who are persuaded, or are open to being persuaded, of the importance of religion to public life, and of public life to religion. That said, we offer a brief statement of editorial prejudices.

Religion and public life. The trick is in making the right connections between the two. And making the right connections requires a measure of clarity about what we mean by "religion" and what we mean by "public life."

Those meanings and connections have everything to do with the title of this journal. First Things means, first, that the first thing to be said about public life is that public life is not the first thing. First Things means, second, that there are first things, in the sense of first principles, for the right ordering of public life.

The first meaning of First Things is that, for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority. While religion informs, enriches, and provides a moral foundation for public life, the chief purpose of religion is not to serve public life. Here we discover a necessary paradox. Religion that is captive to public life is of little public use. Indeed, such captivity produces politicized religion and religionized politics, and the result, as we know from bitter historical experience, is tragedy for both religion and public life.

Religion best serves public life by relativizing the importance of public life, especially of public life understood as politics. Authentic religion keeps the political enterprise humble by reminding it that it is not the first thing. By directing us to the ultimate, religion defines the limits of the penultimate. By illumining our highest purpose all lesser purposes are brought under transcendent judgment.

That highest purpose can be variously defined, but believing Jews and Christians might agree that it was well defined in the answer to the famous opening question of the Westminster Catechism of 1647. The question is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." It is hard to improve on that. Temporal tasks are best conducted in the light of eternal destiny. Religion points us to the last things, framing the final direction that informs our decisions about life, both personal and public. The chief service of religion, then, is to teach us that the first things are the last things.

By religion and public life we mean something like what Saint Augustine meant by the City of God and the City of Man. The twain inevitably do meet, but they must never be confused or conflated. Whether at the beginning of the fifth century or at the end

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of the twentieth, the particulars of their meeting are always ambiguous. At the deepest level the two cities are in conflict but, along the way toward history's end, they can be mutually helpful. The *polis* constituted by faith delineates the horizon, the possibilities and the limits, of the temporal *polis*. The first city keeps the second in its place, warning it against reaching for the possibilities that do not belong to it. At the same time, it elevates the second city, calling it to the virtue and justice that it is prone to neglect. Thus awareness of the ultimate sustains the modest dignity of the penultimate.

It is our further prejudice that public life includes much more than politics. Public life means, first of all, "culture." Our subtitle could as well be "a journal of religion and culture," except that culture has come to have a narrower meaning in popular usage, referring mainly to what is done in theaters, concert halls, and museums. We will not ignore the cultural in that narrower meaning of the term, but by culture we mean something more inclusive. Culture means the available truth claims, explanatory systems, myths, stories, memories, loyalties, dreams, and nightmares by which a society lives. Culture is the cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and emotive air that we breathe.

So we think it true to say that politics is, in largest part, an expression of culture, and at the heart of culture is religion. Politics is the effort to give just order to public life, employing the ideas made available by the culture. And the most communally binding of those ideas are by nature religious, whether or not they bear the label "religion." Given these considered assumptions, readers should not be surprised when in these pages they come across articles and arguments that are not ostensibly "religious" in the conventional use of the term. One does not always need to talk about God to be talking about God.

But there will also be talk about God. The intellectual, spiritual, and political fonts of our civilizational story are Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Modern thought, especially political thought, is notoriously neglectful of Jerusalem. This poses a particular problem for public discourse in our society. In the West, and most notably in America, the civilizational story is borne by and legitimated by the language of Jerusalem. If the American experiment in representative democracy is not in conversation with biblical religion, it is not in conversation with what the overwhelming majority of Americans profess to believe is the source of morality. To the extent that our public discourse is perceived to be indifferent or hostile to the language of Jerusalem, our social and political order faces an ever deepening crisis of legitimacy.

And so another prejudice must be made explicit. Especially in our high culture, it is taken as axiomatic that ours is a secular society or is rapidly becoming such. In our judgment, that proposition has everything going for it except the empirical evidence. For more than three centuries perceptive observers have been struck by the vitality and pervasiveness of religion in American life. Americans appear to be incorrigibly religious, and the evidence suggests that they are becoming more so. However skeptical we may be about the quality of that religion, to ignore it is to ignore one of the most salient facts about American life.

Religion comes in many forms: Islam, Native American, New Age, feminist witchery, novel versions of Eastern spiritualities, and the vague national piety called civil religion, to name a few. But again, for the overwhelming majority of Americans religion is, however inarticulately, biblical religion. For most purposes relevant to our purpose, that means Christianity and Judaism. We will pay careful attention to the manifold expressions of religion in America and the world. But this journal, like the Institute that is its publisher, is essentially a Jewish-Christian enterprise. The intention of the enterprise is to advance a religiously grounded public philosophy for this and other experiments in human freedom.

In our catalogue of prejudices, a free and democratic order includes pluralism. Pluralism is a much abused term. It is often suggested that, because we are a pluralistic society, we must play down our differences, pretending that our deepest differences make no difference. That, in our judgment, is not pluralism at all. It is the opposite of pluralism. It is the monism of indifference. Pluralism is not relativism, and it is the declared enemy of nihilism. Pluralism is the civil engagement of our differences and disagreements about what is most importantly true. Against the monism that denies the variety of truth, against the relativism that denies the importance of truth, and against the nihilism that denies the existence of truth, we intend to nurture a pluralism that revives and sustains the conversation about what really matters, which is the truth.

Recognizing the difficulties in fulfilling that intention, we take comfort from this story. Once in Chelm, the mystical village of the East European Jews, a man was appointed to sit at the village gate and wait for the Messiah. He complained to the village elders that his pay was too low. "You are right," they said to him. "The pay is low. But consider: the work is steady."

These, then, are some of our prejudices. There are others, of course. We do not, for instance, think that intellectual seriousness is an excuse for being dull. Articles will be scholarly, but not pedantic; thoughtful, but not boring; often unusual, but not esoteric. We hope to attract a general, but literate, readership, well knowing that literacy is not so general as we might wish.

In these pages the reader will find items that report, analyze, instruct, warn, exhort, and sometimes entertain. But the key word is conversation. A real con-

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versation, as distinct from intellectual chatter, is marked by discipline and continuity. Gilbert Keith Chesterton observed that "tradition is the democracy of the dead." Agreeing with that, we intend to take on the questions of today and tomorrow, but always in conversation with the best that has been thought and said in the past. At every historical moment, the contemporary is afflicted by the crippling conceit of its utter novelty. We hope First Things will be an antidote to that intellectual and moral disease.

When in the course of human events something new is launched, a decent respect for the opinion of others calls for a word of explanation. Of course this brief statement of what we're up to will be vindicated or falsified by this and subsequent issues of First Things. We very much hope that you will be part of the continuing conversation, and we invite you to hold us to our word.

Redefining Abortion Politics

Beginning with the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision of last July, Americans were delighted, distressed, or simply puzzled to discover that abortion was back in the political arena. It had been abruptly "removed from politics" by the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, when it became a question reserved to the judiciary. That at least was the conventional wisdom. In fact, for the last two decades abortion has been the single most fervently controverted question in our public life. Dealing as it does with such "pre-political" matters as the meaning of human life and the question of who belongs to the community for which we accept common responsibility, the abortion debate is inescapably cast in terms of morality. And the source of public morality being what it is for most Americans, the debate is inescapably entangled with religion.

While Christianity from the beginning consistently opposed abortion, modern abortion law has more to do with medicine than with religion. Colonial America, for instance, had no statutes against abortion. But, beginning in the 1840s, states began to adopt restrictive abortion laws—or, put differently, laws to protect the unborn. While other factors were involved, the campaign for abortion law was led by the medical community, which in the nineteenth century was aspiring to the dignity of being a profession. The doctors' purpose was to drive out of business the "quacks" who were involved in abortions and other practices that gave medicine a bad name. And, of course, abortion law advanced the monopoly of "certified" medicine. There was another major consideration. By the middle of the last century medical science knew that human life is a continuum from conception to death. Earlier ideas such as "quickening" and "ensoulment" fell to advancing science, not to be revived until *Roe* came up with the notion of "trimesters" as being somehow pertinent to the question of when life begins.

As doctors played the critical role in establishing abortion law, so doctors were critical to dismantling the law a century later. The "abortion reform" movement of the 1960s was strongly supported by a medical establishment that was by then not only securely respectable but almost unchallengeable in its social prestige. Doctors wanted no interference from the law in their control over all medical procedures, including abortion. In an interesting twist and twisting of history, the reformers blamed religion for the abortion law then in existence. And, sure enough, within a few years religion would be rallying to the defense of the abortion law that the medical profession had established but now wanted to abolish. The churches, instructed by medical science about the continuum of human life, would discern in that knowledge moral imperatives that were at odds with medical ambitions.

Nobody, neither the abortion reformers nor the defenders of the unborn, was prepared for *Roe*. As John T. Noonan, the distinguished legal scholar, has observed, this was not the reform or liberalizing of abortion law; this was something that no modern society had undertaken before, the total abolition of abortion law. To be sure, the misunderstanding would persist that *Roe* only established an absolute "right" to abortion in the first trimester. But in fact the Court had declared that any woman who would be emotionally distressed at not getting an abortion was entitled to an abortion at any point during pregnancy.

Although surprised by its broad sweep, the most influential opinion makers were pleased with *Roe*. The *New York Times* editorially declared the abortion debate to be "settled," and *Newsweek* apparently thought it no big deal, giving it less than a page. The religious establishment largely followed suit. An editorial in the *Christian Century* declared that "this is a beautifully accurate balancing of individual vs. social rights.... It is a decision both proabortionists and antiabortionists can live with." Few evangelicals, meanwhile, gave evidence of having pondered the implications of abortion. In 1971 the Southern Baptist Convention, the country's largest Protestant denomination, had "urged Baptists to work for legislation permitting abortion under certain conditions. These include: rape, incest, deformity, emotional health." In 1973 most Baptists undoubtedly thought that *Roe* achieved what they had called for.

Seventeen unsettling years later, it is hard to believe that anyone ever thought that *Roe* had settled the question of abortion. The prolife movement was slow in getting off the ground, but today it is clearly a formidable force in national, state, and local politics.

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Unlike other movements of major social and political change in American history, it had no backing, in fact it had almost unanimous opposition, from the several establishments of the elite culture. The movements against slavery in the nineteenth century and for civil rights in the twentieth had powerful support from cultural control centers in the educational, communications, legal, and religious worlds. Although it is often forgotten, the same was true of the prohibition movement, which was originally considered part of the drive for "progressive" reform. In sharpest contrast to those movements, the prolife insurgency exemplified what in the 1960s was admiringly called "grassroots organization."

Among establishment institutions, the Roman Catholic bishops were almost alone in support of the prolife position. Needless to say, many who were more firmly ensconced in the American establishment took this as further evidence that Roman Catholics were not really "one of us." And, as the story is told by Catholic lay activists, the bishops took their sweet time in doing anything more than issuing occasional statements against what prolifers call the "abortion holocaust." Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the Roman Catholic bishops were in the vanguard of public dissent from the logic and policy prescriptions of *Roe*. The evangelicals and fundamentalists who would in a few years be dubbed the "Religious Right" began to flex their political muscles in the mid-seventies, but abortion was then not nearly as important to them as pornography, school prayer, rock music, national defense, and other issues. By the dawn of the eighties that would change dramatically.

The turnaround that brought the abortion question back into the arenas of democratic political discourse cannot be attributed entirely to the prolife movement. Millions of Americans who are not part of that movement, and may even be uneasy about it, are nonetheless made morally nervous by 1.5 million abortions per year, more than 25 million since *Roe*. They cannot stifle the suspicion that these statistics translate into dead babies. In addition, prochoice advocacy is popularly associated with radical feminism and other forces widely assumed to be linked to sexual promiscuity, divorce, pornography, homosexual activism, AIDS, and related ills producing what many see as the moral decay of American society.

Then there is the class factor. Kristen Luker of the University of California, who identifies with the prochoice position, insightfully analyzed this class division in *Abortion Politics*. It is commonly said that abortion is a "women's issue," but studies by Luker and others make clear that women are sharply divided. The upper middle class and the well off, especially those who tend to view their lives in terms of independence and career, are much more likely to be prochoice. Millions of other women find their fulfillment in marriage, family, and community involvement, and they deeply resent what they view as the feminist contempt heaped upon them by their social betters. Far from the prochoice position reflecting "the women's viewpoint," women are significantly more prolife than men. (The most consistently prochoice sector of the population is sexually active—read promiscuous—males. Their reason for favoring abortion should be no mystery.)

The many social and cultural factors involved make it apparent why abortion is the single most important battleground in what is no less than a *Kulturkampf*, a war over the definition of our common life. In addition to social and cultural factors, there is the not insignificant matter of the legal incoherence of *Roe*, which finally began to crumble under judicial examination. All that said, however, it is impossible to explain the return of abortion to the political process apart from the prolife movement, which in truth is a bewilderingly diverse concatenation of movements. Its leaders are understandably gratified by their successes since *Roe*. They are also vulnerable to the temptations of triumphalism, of overestimating the ground that they have won and the certainty of victories ahead.

Despite court rulings and the arguments joined in state legislatures, hardly a dent has been made in the abortion practices established by *Roe*. To the astonishment of many, there is evidence that the pro-abortion argument is making a strong comeback in the political arena and the battle for public opinion. The apparently effective prochoice pitch, ironically, is vintage Reaganism—"Let's get the government off our backs." When the value of liberty is pitted against the value of life, many Americans are clearly inclined to opt for liberty. This does not mean they have changed their view of abortion. In some polls, a majority of those who say that the abortion decision should be up to the mother alone also say that they believe abortion is murder. It seems likely that over time people will not be satisfied with a position that, at least implicitly, supports legally approved murder. One obvious way to solve that problem is to stop thinking of abortion as murder. That is the outcome favored by the prochoice strategy of forcing a choice between liberty and life. Prolife leadership has to find better ways to persuade the public and their representatives that life and liberty (as in "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness") require one another, that the first liberty is the right to life, that the refusal to defend the defenseless undermines liberty and life alike.

On the battle lines, the prochoice side is backed by the big money, the prestige media, the major foundations, and most of the elite institutions of the society. Prolifers have the advantage in unpaid activists and a vast, if loosely coordinated, network of churches and other voluntary organizations. The class factor was evident in a recent meeting of prolife leaders where the suggestion was made that they, like Planned Parenthood and its allies, should take out full-page ads in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. A leading prolife strategist is reported to have quashed the idea. "I can't imagine a bigger waste of money," he said. "Our people don't read those papers, and we aren't going to change the minds of the people who do read them."

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That assumption, one might argue, guarantees that the prochoice forces will control the media "story line" of the abortion battles. On the other hand, over the past seventeen years that control has not been terribly effective in shaping popular attitudes. Consistent with its judgment that *Roe* had settled the abortion question, the *Times* in the years following did its best to ignore dissenters. When it did take note of prolifers, it generally portrayed them as socially marginal religious zealots. Yet in the week before the *Webster* decision, the *Times* ran as its lead story the results of its own poll showing that only 22 percent of those asked approved of the unconditional right to abortion established by *Roe*.

Social critics who worry about the influence of the media in our public life might draw comfort from the media's inability, after two decades of concerted effort, to persuade Americans to give up their moral objections to abortion. At the same time, the media's power to perpetuate misinformation is truly impressive, as witness the widespread belief that *Roe* permitted unquestioned access to abortion only in "the first trimester." Nonetheless, the relevant survey research indicates that public opinion on abortion has been remarkably stable for more than ten years. About 20 percent of Americans favor an unconditional right to abortion, about 20 percent favor an absolute prohibition, and the remaining 60 percent think abortion should be legal in certain circumstances. When those "certain circumstances" are specified, it becomes evident that 75 percent of the people think that more than 95 percent of the abortions done today should not be allowed by law. In the post-*Webster* climate, however, the prochoice ploy of forcing a choice between liberty and life seems to have made headway in unsettling the previous stability of public opinion.

These realities of abortion politics appear to be lost on many politicians who say they want to be prolife. They are intimidated both by the media power of the prochoice side and by the not-one-inch adamancy of the absolute prohibitionists. Successful politics in America generally requires the avoidance of "extremism." The oddity is that politicians who profess to be prolife recognize absolute prohibition as one "extreme" while failing to identify abortion on demand as the polar "extreme." Once that point is established, politicians who have the wit for it can effectively argue that the goal of the first "extreme," however desirable, is politically unobtainable, while the second "extreme" is morally intolerable. In this way they have the opportunity to identify themselves with the 60 percent of Americans who want comprehensive legal protection of the unborn, while allowing for some few and rare exceptions. That would seem to be the centrist or moderate position in abortion politics.

Moderation, compassion, progress—these are winning tickets in American politics. As prolife politics can be defined as moderate, so also it can persuasively be defined as compassionate, since it demonstrates concern not only for the unborn but for the severely handicapped, the "useless" aged, and all the others who do not pass the "quality of life" tests imposed by the powerful. And so too it can persuasively be defined as progressive, since it aims to move toward a "kinder, gentler America" beyond the wanton killing and lethal logic of *Roe*.

In fact, however, very few politicians and not enough leaders in the prolife movement seem to be working on such a redefinition of abortion politics. And that cannot help but be a comfort to the proponents of "choice" and "privacy" who confidently expect the continuation of abortion practice under *Roe*, even after *Roe* is no longer the law of the land.

Opinion

Reflections on the Flag-Burning Case

Mary Ann Glendon

One of my jobs as a summer reporter for the *The Berkshire Eagle* during my college and law school years was to cover the Fourth of July parade in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This day-long assignment in stifling heat was not coveted by the regular newsroom staff, and so it routinely fell to me as low person on the totem pole.

In my memory, all of these occasions now are blended into one big parade, except for the time I sat next to Norman Rockwell in the reviewing stand. When the head of the procession, American flag held high, passed in front of us, Rockwell, himself already a national symbol of sorts, leaped to his feet, placed his hand over his heart, and called out, "Long may she wave!" The rest of us rose too as the first flag passed by. What we did not anticipate was that our illustrious neighbor would stand to salute the flag every single time one passed. There were a lot of American flags in a Fourth of July parade in those days. But, after some initial confusion, we all followed suit. The old man gave us quite a workout.

With nearly thirty years distance from that event, what strikes me now is that Rockwell's feeling about the flag, or at least his way of expressing it, was even then out of synch with the sentiments of most of his

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fellow Berkshire County residents. All in the reviewing stand were slightly discomfited by Rockwell's repeated manifestations of civic piety. I am sure that what drove most of us to our feet after the initial salute had less to do with the flag than with the concern of some of us that Rockwell should not be left standing alone and of others that they should not be embarrassed by remaining seated once nearly everyone else was standing.

This is not to say we were indifferent to the flag. Still, as I recall all those parades, it seems to me that the things that moved us were rather more personal. Besides the stirring martial music and the fun of seeing friends and relatives marching, there was the serious part of the parade—groups of veterans in uniform, middle-aged and elderly survivors of the nation's wars and military adventures, whose justice we did not then question. The Fourth of July, marking the beginning of a war of independence, belonged in an important way (as did Memorial Day) to our local American Legionnaires and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Of all the people who have been distressed by the Supreme Court's decision in the flag-burning case, the most deeply and personally aggrieved are probably the nation's veterans and their families. Yet, even for these, it's been a long, long way from Iwo Jima to Saigon and beyond.

Now, in the new post-Vietnam America, there comes before the nation's highest court a case involving sacrilege against the principal symbol of our civil religion. The legal issue, strictly speaking, was a rather narrow one. Several years ago, the Court had decided that civil blasphemy was protected by the First Amendment (i.e., that the state could not constitutionally punish *verbal* disrespect for the flag). It had also extended constitutional protection to certain disrespectful *behavior* toward the flag (i.e., wearing the flag on the seat of one's pants.) Was burning the flag in a different category? In deciding that it was not, the majority made clear that flag burning which tended to provoke an immediate breach of the peace would still be punishable under state laws.

Something more profound than distinctions among various ways of expressing contempt must account for the emotion elicited by the Court's decision that flag burning, too, was within the scope of protected freedom of expression. Yet it is hard to zero in on what that something is. The four judicial opinions in the case, the arguments of the state of Texas and of the defendant, Gregory Johnson, as well as press reports of the reactions of the citizenry to the decision reveal a remarkable lack of consensus on what the flag means. To the defendant it is a symbol of oppression and evil ("Red, white, and blue, we spit on you.") To the State of Texas, it is a symbol of "nationhood and national unity." To constitutional law scholar Laurence Tribe, it is an "emblem of unity *and* diversity." To Justice Brennan, writing for the majority, it symbolizes our principles of freedom, inclusiveness, and tolerance of dissent, and thus protects the very behavior that defiled it. But Justice Stevens, in a strange-loop dissent, also saw the flag as a symbol of freedom and tolerance, yet considered that was precisely why it should be protected from "desecration."

The range of popular reactions was even wider. One witness to the flag burning reverently collected its remains and buried them in his backyard. Another bystander, interviewed on National Public Radio, said, "The way I see it, I buy a flag, it's my property. I can burn it." An American Legion spokesman who opposed the decision, when asked on the *Today Show* to say precisely what the flag symbolized, replied, in a simplified version of the Stevens strange loop, "It stands for the fact that this is a country where we can do what we want, where we have the right to do what we want."

What is one to make of the degree to which those who would make flag burning a crime resort to religious language in describing the flag and the offense against it? The section of the Texas Penal Code under which the defendant was prosecuted is titled, "Desecration of a Venerated Object." The venerated objects protected by the statute include not only the national flag, but also the Texas flag, public monuments, and places of worship and burial. In his dissent, Chief Justice Rehnquist referred to the "almost mystical reverence" and "the uniquely deep awe and respect for our flag felt by virtually all of us."

Not everyone is comfortable with speaking about the flag in terms usually reserved for religious matters, or with according "mystical reverence" to secular symbols. Johnson's lawyer pointed out that in National Socialist Germany, the swastika was protected from desecration. Is it possible that what is disturbing to devotees of civil religion about the flag-burning decision is that we are increasingly aware of the difficulty in specifying any meaningful shared content to the symbol? Despite the spectacle of politicians falling over themselves to rally 'round the flag, it is doubtful that there is any substantial American consensus on what the flag symbolizes, because it is becoming hard to specify in what sense this increasingly heterogeneous country is a "nation."

Further, it is unlikely that a contrary decision in the flag case, or the passage of a statute, or adoption of a constitutional amendment could ever settle these matters. A shared sense of the meaning of the flag has vanished from the national scene along with the small-town life that Norman Rockwell knew, idealized, and immortalized. Civil society has become more complex, with national political boundaries becoming less relevant to economic activity and the flow of commerce, and with many Americans defining themselves in relation to a region, a race, a religion, or other group before identifying with the nation.

The civil religion is in a period of upheaval. Whether

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the outcome is to be reformation or decline, no one can say. The crisis of faith has brought forth many who are attached to a past that can never be retrieved, or that perhaps never was—at least not in quite the way they imagine it. It has brought out others who delight in destruction and irreverence for their own sake. At best, it has given rise to civil conversation about the goals our society is to pursue.

Meanwhile, the job of protecting the national symbol has been shifted from law to other social norms: custom, convention, disapproval. As the pub philosopher Andy Capp once remarked, "The difference between law and custom is that its takes a helluva lot more nerve to violate a custom."

Mary Ann Glendon *is professor of law at Harvard Law School. Her most recent book is* The Transformation of Family Law.

The Closed Mind of Arthur Schlesinger

David Novak

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s widely noticed essay in the *New York Times Book Review* last summer, "The Opening of the American Mind," illustrates among other things the truth of the old adage, *les extremes touchent*. Schlesinger's title, of course, announces a categorical rejection of the thesis of Professor Allan Bloom's recent best-selling book, *The Closing of the American Mind*. The extremes in this case are that Bloom argues for "absolutism" over "relativism," Schlesinger the exact opposite. But they hold in common rejection of religion as being capable of founding an acceptable public philosophy for our time. Of the two, I find Bloom on this issue "pretentious" (as Schlesinger designates his entire book) but ingenuous, Schlesinger even more pretentious and disingenuous as well. In any case, no one committed to even the possibility of a religiously founded public philosophy can ignore either rejection.

Bloom, who explicitly follows his teacher Leo Strauss, assumes that philosophy is the pursuit of truth by and from reason alone, something that can only be practiced by an esoteric elite. The masses, on the other hand, need the guidance of religious tradition—which can co-exist with this elitist philosophy—lest they fall prey to irrational ideologies. These ideologies, by masquerading as reason, leave no room for authentic reason and its philosopher practitioners. Unlike religious tradition, they are totalitarian in thought and in deed. Bloom's pretentiousness lies in his assumption that philosophy and religion are so radically unrelated. His system, moreover, leaves religion in a decidedly secondary status: useful rather than true.

Schlesinger's disingenuousness is seen in his insistence that he holds religion "in high regard," which is about as believable as the claim, "some of my best friends are Jews," when uttered by an anti-Semite. Schlesinger states that "religion has an indispensable social function," but the body of his address argues that absolutism is the root of the worst social and political evils, and that all absolutism is essentially religious, whether it is the "Judeo-Christian tradition" or "the totalitarian social religions of our age" (by which, one assumes, he means fascism and communism). The indispensability of religion's "social function" is believable coming from Allan Bloom; it is unbelievable coming from Arthur Schlesinger.

The more interesting substantive questions raised by Schlesinger's essay are: 1) is Schlesinger truly the relativist he claims to be; and 2) if not, does his own position itself have religious presuppositions, even if he himself is unaware of them?

Schlesinger obviously knows that to proclaim any kind of "absolute relativism" will undercut his own position with a contradiction as old as the "Cretan Paradox" (i.e., if a Cretan says "all Cretans are liars," can he himself be believed?). So, Schlesinger stipulates, "our relative values are not matters of whim and happenstance. History has given them to us." Clearly, then, he engages in the same "deference to authority" as the religious absolutists he so roundly condemns. "History" is his authority.

Of course, Schlesinger would retort that his authority is empirically/pragmatically warranted. "They [our relative values] work for us." Aside from the philosophical problem of inferring a prescription ("ought") from a description ("is"), what does it mean to say that certain values work for us? Who are the "us" here? How do we know when prevailing values are "working" and when they are not? Are they working for the welfare recipient, or for all the other powerless outsiders in our society? They, and millions of other Americans who have other complaints, would surely disagree with Professor Schlesinger, one of the highest paid and most influential academics in America today.

The fact is that it is simply not empirically testable whether anyone's values "work" or not. Values are affirmed because one believes they are true and that it is good to put them into practice. Such beliefs entail the choice of whose voice is to be hearkened—which authority to obey. *Pace* Mr. Justice Holmes, whom Schlesinger quotes authoritatively, such ultimate choices do involve one's view of the very nature of the universe and one's place in it. To be sure, such choices must have some experience to illustrate their worldly applicability, but they are not defeated when other experience does not function *for* them. For they

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apply *to* experience, they are not derived *from* it; or to put it more classically, they are *in* the world, not *of* it.

Hence, only by revealing his own views of his place in the cosmos—which are religious as even such nontraditionalists as Spinoza and Einstein understood—can Schlesinger argue for the authority of "History," or "our folkways, traditions, standards." Why is "History" or even "history" not "bunk" for him as it was for Henry Ford (surely one of "our national heroes")? Why should our values have "universal application" if they are not universally true? And how can Professor Schlesinger argue for the authority of "our deep-seated preference" on secularist grounds with any more weight than the many more Americans who would argue for them on religious grounds? Does not our founding document, the Declaration of Independence (never mentioned by Schlesinger, interestingly), ground its claims in "Nature's God"? Would not most Americans regard that document as more authoritative than *Huckleberry Finn*, whose words Schlesinger uses as the benediction of his secularist sermon (originally delivered at the secular ritual of the inauguration of the president of Brown University)?

It would seem, then, that Schlesinger's claims do reveal religious presuppositions. An appeal to "what history has given" suggests the same reverence with which my fellow Jewish believers, for example, praise God as "the Giver of the Torah." The issue, therefore, is not religion *or* secularism, but *whose religion.*

Finally, the fact that religion—at least in the West—has learned something about human rights from democratic experience does not mean that "human rights is not a religious idea," as Schlesinger dogmatically asserts. The advances in human rights of which we Americans can be justly proud (however partial they might yet be) can be traced to the fact that they were successfully advocated as a development *out of the traditions* which long predate the founding of the American republic. Thus people who first believed that all humans are created in the image of God are quite well prepared to accept the idea of *inalienable* rights. People who first believed that God authorizes prophets to criticize kings are quite well prepared to accept the idea of discursive freedom. People who first revered Amos are quite well prepared to respect Martin Luther King.

These rights were not presented as something *de novo*, unlike those of the French revolution (for whose bicentennial Schlesinger's militant secularism might actually be much more appropriate). They were presented as traditional truths in new garb, and the traditions out of which they developed have been clearly understood by most as being religious. That is why, for example, most Americans have likened their national enterprise to a "covenant" more often than to the more secular image of a "contract." Furthermore, despite the emphasis by such theologians as Augustine, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and Reinhold Niebuhr (with whom Schlesinger enjoyed a personal association) on the need to distinguish between divine and human authority, it is a gross distortion of *all* of their views for Schlesinger to impute to them the kind of relativism which makes the existence of God and the reality of revelation (the basis of all western religious traditions) so utterly irrelevant for public life.

At least some modern religious thinkers, Niebuhr most prominently, have attempted to affirm the value of democracy on religious grounds. By locating the grounds of democracy in the religious need to limit any human claim to absolute authority because the revealing God of the Bible is the only absolute, these thinkers provided an impetus for democracy to develop beyond the type of relativistic indifference that has proved to be so impotent in the face of the lure of idolatrous totalitarianisms. They have also thereby provided a religious self-corrective for the abuses of religion by religious institutions, which is one of the main roles of prophecy in the Bible.

Hence, in the current crisis of values in our contemporary culture, their approach provides a more open affirmation of the historical capability of democratic ideas and institutions ("the American mind") to develop by uncovering their deepest roots. Their historical openness shows, by stark contrast, the closed dogmatism of the historian, Arthur Schlesinger.

David Novak *is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia and the author of* Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification.

The Catholic Moment: Blocked, Botched, or Transformed?

George Weigel

Secularization theology. The death of God. Imperial overstretch. The end of history. The half-life of an intellectual fad is what, now, three months? Will the aforementioned relics of arguments past soon be joined on the antiquities shelves by the idea that we live in "the Catholic Moment"—Richard Neuhaus'

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bold ecumenical claim that this is "the moment in which the Roman Catholic Church in the United States assumes its rightful role in the culture-forming task of constructing a religiously informed public philosophy for the American experiment in ordered liberty"?

Media coverage of things religious being what it is in these United States, the fact that it was a Lutheran pastor proclaiming the Catholic Moment (without benefit of theses nailed to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' door, alas) helped give the Neuhaus proposition its first fifteen minutes of fame. Still, the proposal may have a lot more staying power than the fads cited above, and for a simple reason: the empirical foundation of the Catholic Moment proposal seems stronger than when it was first announced.

That Americans are, and seem likely to remain, an incorrigibly religious people is now admitted by Norman Lear and his People for the American Way. The notion that religious convictions will have something to do with how Americans think about this republican experiment in ordered liberty is beginning to sink into such previous bastions of unrelieved numbers-crunching as the American Political Science Association. And that there is a "circulation of elites" going on in American religion, with the churches of the great Protestant mainline continuing to fade from their accustomed location at the center of the debate over religion and public life, is now conceded at the very apex of the ecumenical and liberal Protestant pyramid: it was not a disgruntled critic, but the Rev. Arie Brouwer, then general secretary of the National Council of Churches, who admitted some time back that the mainline was, indeed, becoming the oldline, and might soon be the sideline.

In short, the sociological premise of the Catholic Moment proposal—that an opening for leadership existed at the point of intersection between religiously grounded moral conviction and public argument over the nature and course of the American experiment—seems as firmly established as these things get.

Whether Catholicism in America will seize its "moment" is another matter.

It can't be said that the proposal has exactly swept the field among American Catholic opinion-makers. Among the periodicals, the idea of a Catholic Moment has virtually disappeared from *America, Commonweal,* and the *National Catholic Reporter,* in each case after initially deprecatory reviews. Nor is this disinclination to press the argument forward driven ideologically from the port side: over to starboard, Neuhaus' analysis has been found distasteful by *Communio, The Wanderer,* and *30 Days.* Nor, at the higher altitudes of American Catholic intellectual and institutional officialdom, can it be said that the proposition has seized the imaginations of theologians and bishops. The former have been indifferent-to-hostile, in the main; and the latter are, well, cf. Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha) for a poignant reflection on the ancient problem of busyness.

Nor does it seem likely that Rome will be prodding the Church in the United States into taking seriously the notion that this may be its "moment" in shaping an ecumenically vibrant religious debate over American public life. The Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger might find the proposal (and the role they play in Neuhaus' analysis of the moment) intriguing, but in Vatican venues the classic Continental biases about Catholic social thought have been further reinforced by the presence in the Curia of some Latin Americans whose affection for the United States is not exactly over-developed.

In short, and precisely in the place where one might have expected the proclamation of a Catholic Moment to be most welcome—in the Catholic Church in the United States—it has been, if not a bust, then something less than a grand triumph.

Does that mean that the Catholic Moment proposal will fail? Not really. It does mean that the odds on its success have lengthened. But just as there was no reason to think the Catholic Moment would be automatically seized in some foreordained fashion, there is no reason to think that it is doomed to failure. In fact, there are some reasons to think that the proposal may enjoy a second springtime, if you will.

The sociological reason for that modest optimism has been sketched above: there is a circulation of elites in religion-and-public-life circles in America, the mainline has become the oldline, and some institution or cluster of institutions will fill the space left by the mainline/oldline's abdication of its historical role as chief culture-former. On the numbers, the Catholics still look like the best bet, particularly if their religious and intellectual leadership can shake itself out of the exhaustion that seems to have set in after a generation of cantankerousness in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

But there is also a theological "circulation" in progress these days that may press the Catholic Moment forward in a thoroughly ecumenical direction. The fault line in contemporary American theology is not denominational but methodological and attitudinal: between those who still define the theological enterprise in terms of the deconstruction of the Christian classics (the "Catholic" heritage, if you will, the heritage of the first seven ecumenical councils), and those who wish to go beyond modernism into a post-modern reconstruction of credal Christianity for a world capable of a second naivete.

It is the latter—the post-modernists—who seem on the frontiers of debate in questions of biblical hermeneutics, dogmatic and systematic theology, and religious ethics today. The deconstructionists, and particularly those feminist theologians who have made explicit their contempt for classic Christianity, are yesterday's news. The new news, in the 1990s, is the

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"new Catholics": those ecumenical theologians who seek to reclaim the heritage of the early Catholic consensus, not in a romantic return to the *status quo ante* Schleiermacher, but in a creative extension of the classic tradition for a post-modern world.

The Catholic Church may or may not become a significant institutional force in shaping, and carrying, this dynamic element in American religious thought—which will have a profound impact on the narrower issue of religion and "public life." One hopes, even expects, that it will. But the Catholic Moment has gone beyond "the Catholics," denominationally defined: which is, one suspects, not entirely incongruent with what its author had in mind in the first place.

George Weigel *is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. He is the author of* Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy.

A Culture of Poverty?

Don Wycliff

I hadn't thought of Jerry Carter for at least five years. I probably wouldn't have thought of him for at least another five if it hadn't been for the report of the National Research Council's Committee on the Status of Black Americans.

I met Jerry in 1982. I was a reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He was a kid in trouble with the law. Specifically, he was one of a gang of twenty teenagers and thirteen young adults from Chicago's vast, grim Robert Taylor Homes public housing project arrested for pickpocketing at Churchill Downs in Louisville on Kentucky Derby Day. I was sent by my newspaper to cover their hearings and learn what I could of their lives and the adult "Fagin" who supposedly masterminded their crimes.

The National Research Council report ("A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society") reminded me of Jerry because his life seemed to refute one of the book's principle claims: that the "culture of poverty" has little or nothing to do with persistently high rates of black poverty.

I suspected when I first heard this claim that the Committee on the Status of Black Americans, loaded as it was with social scientists, had demolished a straw man, a bloodless construct so rigidly defined as to be meaningless in terms of the actual lives of the humans who inhabit the nation's ghettos and who, for the most part, make up what has come to be called the underclass. After reading the pertinent parts of the 608-page volume, my suspicion was confirmed.

The committee describes the concept fairly enough at first: the culture of poverty is "a distinctive set of beliefs, values, and behavior patterns that tend to perpetuate (the) condition" of those who are poor and segregated. But the discussion quickly degenerates into an exercise in semantic hairsplitting, finally concluding that "taken as a whole, the data and analyses we have examined throw serious doubt on the validity of the strong thesis that culture of poverty is a major cause of self-perpetuating poverty."

Against the committee's data and analyses, I would set the life of Jerry Carter. When I wrote about him for the *Sun-Times*, I didn't use his name. After all, he was a minor—at least chronologically. Instead, I borrowed the title Dickens used for his young pickpocket in *Oliver Twist*, the Artful Dodger.

Jerry told the police and the juvenile court judge in Louisville that he was twelve, and he looked as if he could have been. He later told me, however, that he was fourteen.

He tearfully told the judge that his mother was a maid in a Chicago hotel who worked from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day except Sunday and couldn't afford to come and escort him home, the condition that the judge demanded for each youngster's release. Yet when I as a surrogate delivered Jerry to his apartment at midday on an ordinary Friday, his mother was there, washing greens at the kitchen sink. So were three grown men, at least two of whom were introduced to me as Jerry's brothers.

"We sure do appreciate you bringing him," one of them said to me, as if I had found him lost at an amusement park or some other equally innocuous place. There was no parental reprimand, just smiles and kisses and some jocular banter with the men about having gotten caught.

That was the crazy part: Jerry's criminal activity seemed taken for granted, in his household and his neighborhood. As we approached his building, he was surrounded by children and other teenagers who knew where he had been and what he had been doing and found it not the least bit unusual.

At fourteen, Jerry had been in the pickpocket business for a year and a half, mostly working the streets of downtown Chicago but making an occasional out-of-town foray to an event like the Derby where the pickings would be good. He was a skilled and effortless liar. And he possessed a certain worldly wisdom: He didn't begin telling me the truth about himself until our flight had landed at O'Hare airport and he was safely back "in my own town."

If he shared any mainstream attitude, it was thrift. "If I get more than $100, I save it," he said, describing his work. "If I get less than $100, I spend it, mostly on clothes."

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It's possible that Jerry, who would be twenty-one now if he has survived, may have been successful enough at crime to lift himself and his family out of poverty. He wouldn't be the first American to have done so; some have even made it to respectability. I suspect, however, that Jerry and most of his neighborhood friends are no better off now than they were in 1982. And I suspect that their "distinctive set of beliefs, values, and behavior patterns" has much to do with that.

Jerry Carter has a female counterpart in the culture of poverty. She is the young, pregnant teenage girl, who dreams of being of the age when she can "get my own (welfare) grant and get my own apartment." I wish I could count the number of times I heard that line as a reporter.

Of course, the culture of poverty doesn't exhaust the explanations for persistent black poverty and the underclass. No single explanation does. Indeed, as James Tobin, the Nobel laureate economist who was a member of the Committee on the Status of Black Americans, said at the press conference where the report was released: "Everything is a cause and everything is an effect."

Yet to deny the influence of the culture of poverty is to deny a powerful reality. To deny reality is to assure that one will be defeated by it.

Don Wycliff *is a member of the Editorial Board of the* New York Times.

OLD HAVANA

...pongee-colored girls in white dresses the sun
shone through in multiple haloes
where they lay alongside streets like sofas
reading José Martí behind potted ferns
in avenue-knolls paved with Key West grass
and long-leaved tobacco shaved and scented like bark strips.

I dreamt a UCLA campus built by descendants of conquistadores:
Churriguerra architects and new-freed import-labor,
not the mystical-realism of material-less materialism in La Habana Vieja
in the hands of UNESCO-planners, waiting wanly
at the end of a totalitarian century breeding slaves
freed into nightmare-bondage to an Ever-Glorious Future.

Anthony Kerrigan

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The Capitalism & Morality Debate

Paul Johnson

The decade of the 1980s has proved to be an ideological watershed. It has been marked by a huge resurgence of the power and efficacy of the capitalist market system and a corresponding collapse of confidence in the capacity of socialist "command economies." This loss of confidence in collectivism is the culmination of many decades of trial and misfortune. The truth is that, during the twentieth century, large parts of the world have given the collectivist alternative to capitalism a long, thorough, and staggeringly costly trial, and it seems to have failed absolutely everywhere. It was during the 1980s that this realization dawned even in the quarters most reluctant to admit it—among the rulers of the socialist-style states. Many of them are turning back—in despondency, almost in despair—to the despised market disciplines they had rejected.

Meanwhile the capitalist world is racing ahead and is creating wealth on a scale never before dreamed of. It is clear that capitalism, being a natural force rather than a contrived ideology, springing from instincts deep in our human natures, is modifying itself all the time, and we cannot foresee how it will evolve over the next century. But I am willing to predict, as a result of our experiences in this one, that never again will any considerable body of opinion seriously doubt its wealth-producing capacity or seek to replace it with something fundamentally different. We are near the end of an historical epoch in which capitalism has survived the collectivist assault and is now firmly reestablished as the world's primary way of conducting its economic business.

So where does this leave us? It leaves us, I suggest, with a considerable moral dilemma. I can state the dilemma in one sentence: how do we give a moral dimension to this triumphant reassertion of capitalism? For one thing we know: whereas wealth creation is essential to men's well-being, especially in a world where population is expanding so rapidly, it cannot in itself make men and women happy. We are creatures of the spirit as well as of the flesh, and we cannot be at ease with ourselves unless we feel we are fulfilling, however vaguely or imperfectly, a moral purpose. It is in this respect that capitalism, as such, is inadequate.

It is not that capitalism is immoral. Clergymen who insist that it is and preach against it are themselves confused, as were their predecessors a hundred years ago who insisted that any form of socialism was immoral. One can be a good Christian and a capitalist, just as one can be a good Christian and practice collectivism.

The trouble with capitalism is quite otherwise. It lies in its moral neutrality, its indifference to the notion of moral choices. Capitalism and the market system which gives it its efficiency and its power is single-minded in its thrust—that is why it is so productive. It is blind to all other factors: blind to class, race, and color, to religion and sex, to nationality and creed, to good and evil. It is materialist, impersonal, and non-human. It responds with great speed and accuracy to all the market factors. In a way it is like a marvelous natural computer. But it cannot make distinctions for which it is not programmed. It does not and cannot possess a soul and it therefore lacks a moral inclination one way or the other.

Indeed it is precisely because capitalism is morally indifferent—and so productive of great miseries as well as great blessings—that many idealists early in the nineteenth century saw it as evil, rejected it entirely, and sought to replace it. We have come to the end of that line of argument. We have discovered there is no effective substitute for the market. We have to accept capitalism as the primary means whereby wealth is produced and begin the process of moralization within its terms of reference. I say "begin,"

Paul Johnson *is a British historian whose books include* Modern Times *and* Intellectuals. *He delivered this speech at a policy conference at the American Enterprise Institute.*

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but in a sense we have been doing it for two hundred years—by factories acts, mines acts, by monopoly and fair-trading legislation, and by all the countless laws we devise to restrict ways in which the market system can be distorted by man's cupidity.

But these are merely negative attempts to correct the excesses of capitalism. They do not in themselves give capitalism a positive moral purpose. That is a quite different and much more difficult matter. The moment you start trying to give capitalism a moral purpose, you risk interfering with the basic market mechanism which provides its wealth-creating power. If, for instance, you try to use capitalism to promote greater equality of wealth by imposing on it a steeply progressive, redistributive system of taxation, you frustrate the way in which it rewards its chief dynamic force, the acquisitive impulse, and you are liable to end by making everyone poorer. Or if, to take another example, you try to redistribute power within capitalism by balancing managerial authority by trade union privileges, you either choke the entrepreneurial spirit or you eliminate profits—the system's lifeblood—or, as a rule, you do both, and so again you end by making everyone poorer.

Almost all efforts to provide capitalism itself with a positive moral purpose run into the same difficulty. Great Britain, between 1945 and the end of the 1970s, was a classic case where repeated and often ingenious attempts were made to cudgel capitalism into a system of national redistribution of wealth. It was part socialism, part corporatism, and wholly inefficient. It was baptized by the moral-sounding name of "the mixed economy." In fact, by the end of the 1970s, it had come to resemble an ancient piece of do-it-yourself machinery, constructed by amateurs, held together by adhesive tape and emitting old-fashioned steam from every joint. The British economy had become one of the least efficient and productive in the Western world. In 1979 Mrs. Thatcher and her government began the return to true capitalism, but even after a decade of common sense reforms and rapid improvements in productivity, we calculate it will still take us another ten years or so to catch up with Germany and France, while the United States and Japan are still further beyond our reach.

That is the price of trying to make capitalism do something which is not in its nature to do—promote equality. The price is paid in the shape of reduced national wealth and income—lower general living standards, inadequate health care, a run-down transport system, impoverished social services, underfunded schools. These results have been repeated, in varying degrees, everywhere else in the world where attempts to invest capitalism with positive moral functions have been made. We have to accept that the market system, while exceedingly robust when left to itself, rapidly becomes sick and comatose once you try to force it to do things contrary to its nature. The more you interfere with its mechanism by imposing moral objectives the less efficiently it works. Indeed, under a sufficient weight of moral obligation, it will seize up altogether.

How do we escape from this difficulty? How can we practice capitalism, with its unrivaled capacity to produce wealth, within the framework of a society that recognizes moral objectives? To put it another way: is it possible to harness the power of market capitalism to moral purposes without destroying its dynamism? That is the real, practical question that faces humanity. And I often wish our Christian theologians would address themselves to it, instead of peremptorily dismissing capitalism as intrinsically evil, as so many of them thoughtlessly do.

I do not pretend the problem is easily solved. On the other hand, I think it is defeatist to regard it as inherently insoluble. It is a mistake to try to turn capitalism itself into a moral animal. But I think it is possible to run it in tandem with public policies that make use of its energy while steering it in a moral direction. Let me indicate a number of ways in which I believe this can happen.

First, and in some ways the most important, is to provide the capitalist economy with an overall legal framework which has a moral basis. This can only be done if we accept that a fundamental object of the just society is to establish, so far as is humanly possible, absolute equality before the law. Equality of wealth is a utopian fantasy whose hopeless pursuit usually leads to tyranny. But equality before the law is a reasonable objective, whose attainment—albeit in an imperfect form—is well within the reach of civilized modern societies. Moreover, this form of equality responds to a strong human need: for whereas few of us really want equality of possessions, or believe it possible, all of us want fairness. The notion of a fair society is an attractive concept, and one toward which progress can undoubtedly be made. Moreover equality before the law is a necessary adjunct to the competitive nature of capitalism: the end result cannot be equality, but from start to finish the rules must apply equally to all.

What do we mean by equality before the law? We mean that the law must make no distinction of birth or caste, race or color, sex or tribe, wealth or poverty. It must hold the scales of justice blindfolded. In a curiously paradoxical way, the capitalist system similarly makes no distinction about the nature of men and women. Hence for the law so to distinguish is a gross interference with the market mechanism and makes it less efficient. Equality before the law reinforces the natural power of capitalism, so that in this case moral purpose and wealth creation go hand in hand. Inequality before the law takes many forms, some of them grotesque, as in the Republic of South Africa or the Soviet Union, some more subtle. Even in advanced Western societies like the United States, where the principle is well understood and established,

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the ability to buy more law than your neighbor is a ubiquitous source of inequality. In no society that I know is full equality before the law established in practice, and I do not say that it can be realized perfectly and overnight anywhere. But it is one form of equality that can be broadly attained without destructive side-effects, and systematic progress toward it is an essential object of any society that wishes to place capitalism in a context of justice.

Another way to combine capitalism with moral purpose is for society to endorse the related but broader concept of equality of opportunity. It is one of the miracles of the human condition that all of us, however humble, possess talents of one kind or another, waiting to be of service. The notion that all of us have something to contribute is God-given and stands at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The range of talents is as infinite as human variety itself, and the society that is swiftest to identify them in each, and put them to use, will certainly be the most efficient (as well as just). Here again, capitalism and justice pursue the same ends, for capitalism thrives on meritocracy—one of the prime functions of the market is to identify and reward objective merit—and it creates wealth most rapidly when all obstacles to equality of opportunity, social and historic as well as purely legal, are removed. This aspect of equality is a vital element in the moral legitimation of capitalism, for an economic structure in which every man and woman, in theory at least, can progress from the lowest to the highest place cannot be held to be intrinsically unjust.

I say "in theory." What about in practice? It is unrealistic to talk of equality of opportunity without taking drastic measures to make high-quality education generally available to those who can profit from it. I know that in practice we are not going to get a society where all will be able to benefit from the standards of the best schools and colleges. To begin with, throughout human history the most gifted teachers have always been in limited supply—there are never enough to go around. In any case, the culture and habits of industry, which parents transmit to their children, make absolute equality of opportunity unattainable. But it is one thing to concede the difficulties, quite another to accept the present system of educational inequality, which exists to some degree in every country in the world. There is no single way, in my view, more likely to make capitalism morally acceptable, to anchor its functions in justice, than by giving the poor access, by merit, to high quality education of every kind and at every stage. And it is implicit in this objective that we identify merit, of every variety, at the earliest possible age—another respect in which we tend to be woefully inept.

Of course, to educate the poor, according to aptitude, to the highest standards is enormously expensive. But it is the great merit of capitalism that it does produce wealth in immense quantities for such necessary purposes; and the more people we educate efficiently, the more wealth the system will produce. The matter is increasingly urgent for, as capitalism advances itself, it demands ever more refined skills at each level. If training in them is not available for all who can benefit, inequalities—both within societies and between them—will increase instead of diminish, and the moral credentials of the system will inevitably be subjected to growing challenge. We have, in short, to educate ourselves into justice, and to do so with all deliberate speed.

But we must not stop at access to education. We must see to it that there is more readiness of access to the capitalist system itself. I believe that the notion of "democratic capitalism" is a genuine one, and that its realization, to some degree at least, is within our grasp. There are many ways in which it can be brought about. Some are old. Some we have only recently discovered. Some are yet to be devised.

In the last half-century and more, we have found that to take an industry into public ownership in no way democratizes it—quite the contrary. Nationalization, whether in the form of a monolithic public corporation, as in the old British system, or through so-called "workers' control," as in Yugoslavia, for example, merely puts the business firmly into the hands of bureaucratic or union elites, or indeed both. But it is now possible, as has been found in Britain and elsewhere, to float public corporations so that they become the property of millions of small stockholders.

Let us not deceive ourselves that this conveys control of them to the masses. But it does spread ownership widely, and it does introduce an element of mass financial participation in the system that is new and healthy. It gives millions of humble, ordinary people a sense that they are no longer entirely victims of the system: that they act, as well as are acted upon; that to some small degree they have a stake in society. It is a source of pride, of reassurance, even of security, and it is thus morally significant.

Democratic capitalism also lends itself to the old but unrealized idea of co-ownership by giving the workforce easy entry into the purchase of stock. Over 90 percent, for instance, of those who work for the recently privatized British corporation British Telecom now hold stock in the firm—thus bridging the destructive and needless chasm that separates owners and workers and that promotes class warfare. In any great capitalist enterprise, the community of interest between those who own, run, and work for it is, or ought to be, far greater than any conflict of interest. Access of workers to stock is the surest way of demonstrating this fundamental truth, which is often obscured by political sloganeering. This is particularly important in industries where the work is hard and dangerous and the profits high, such as mining and offshore oil extraction, to give two obvious examples. Democratic capitalism, and especially the worker-stock ownership aspect of it, serves to refute one of the gravest

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charges against capitalist practice—that it is, by its very nature, exploitative.

Stock ownership is not, however, the only or even the best way in which the notion of democratic capitalism can be pursued. One of the most important but least-understood disadvantages of the so-called "mixed economy" is that, in its inevitable drift to corporatism, it involves tripartite deals between government, labor unions, and large-scale capital. Such deals invariably leave out small businesses. In Britain, for instance, it is only since we have begun to dismantle mixed-economy corporatism that the needs of small businesses, and equally important, of those wishing to start them, have played any part in the formation of government policy.

Why have we been so remiss? Now that most of the world is necessarily turning its back on the soil, to start one's own business has replaced that fundamental human urge to farm one's own land—it is an expression of the natural creativity in man, and as such a profoundly moral impulse. Sensible, practical assistance in helping people to set up their own businesses, and to ensure a climate of fairness in which they operate, is the best way to promote, at one and the same time, equality of opportunity, democratic capitalism, and, not least, the efficiency and acceptability of the system as a whole. There is almost invariably a strong correlation between the number of small business starts and soundly based economic expansion. So here again the interests of justice and the process of wealth creation coincide.

Popular access to capitalism at a national level has its international counterpart in access to markets. The vigorous promotion of free trade is an important way in which capitalism is legitimized morally. Protectionism in any form tends to undermine capitalist efficiency by creating privileged industries, and it is unacceptable morally because it deprives the consumer of the full fruits of the market. It always appears to have advantages for new, small, and weak economies—or for old established ones meeting new and ruthless competition. But in the long term, and often in the short term too, these advantages are greatly outweighed by the drawbacks. Equally objectionable are barter deals between states, or deals between states and big international corporations. All these attempts to escape the rigors of competition invariably produce corruption and fraud and bring out the worst aspects both of big government and of capitalism itself. One might put it this way: international free trade is the global version of equality of opportunity.

But just as equal opportunities within a society are unlikely to become reality without general access to high-quality education, so free trade will not in practice be generally accepted, especially among the poorer countries, until the huge discrepancies between nations in technical and commercial skills are diminished. I do not think that the normal workings of the international market will be recognized as just and reasonable until we narrow this gap, so much more important in the long run than any more obvious gap in living standards or financial resources. Yet here, perhaps, is the best way in which richer nations can effectively help the poorer ones.

Old-style aid is now discredited, and I think rightly so, for certainly there are few more foolish things than for a rich nation to salve its conscience by transferring cash to the government of a poor one, thus as a rule keeping an inefficient and unpopular tyranny in power. But it is another matter to use our resources to train the disadvantaged masses of the Third World—and indeed the emerging ex-communist world too—in the skills of market capitalism. By widening the availability of such skills, we do many things simultaneously: we benefit the poorer countries by enabling them to compete; we benefit ourselves by making it possible for them to open their markets to us; we strengthen the system by giving it universality as well as fairness; and consumers everywhere find goods cheaper as competition increases. Here again, the process of placing capitalism in a moral context has the additional advantage of adding to its wealth-creating power. To sum up my case: doing the right thing morally usually proves to be commercially the right thing to do as well.

However, I willingly concede that there is an important flaw in my argument. And it applies whether one looks at individual societies or at the global community—within nations and between them. However thoroughly one applies the principle of equality before the law, however ingeniously one provides equality of opportunity and universal access to high-quality education, bitter experience seems to show that a great many people remain in deprivation, misery, and hopelessness. It is not enough to provide individuals with an exit from this underclass. Its very existence, as a class, perpetuating itself from generation to generation, is or at least seems to be a categorical indictment of the capitalist market system itself.

In fact it does not truly reflect upon the market. The market can be made fair—to give it moral legitimacy it *must* be made fair—but what it cannot be made to do, at least not without wrecking it, is to discriminate in favor of failure. And we have to face the fact that many human beings, in any society, will fail however fair the rules and however wide the opportunities. There is overwhelming evidence that market capitalism can conquer mass want and create a very general affluence anywhere in the world. What we now have to demonstrate is that the societies in which capitalism is the energizing force can cope with the minority problem of failure. It is, in my judgment, the biggest single task our societies face today: a problem which is at one and the same time moral, economic, and political.

It is *moral* because we cannot accept, on a permanent

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basis, the exclusion of perhaps a fifth of society from a life of modest decency. Earlier ages had to reconcile themselves to permanent mass poverty. We *know* a solution can be found, and we have an inescapable moral obligation to find it.

It is *economic* because it is waste on a colossal scale. Often up to 50 percent of budgets are absorbed by coping with poverty. And it is not just material waste but waste of minds and hearts.

It is *political* because the percentage involved is too small to effect change through the democratic process. Thus, there is an inherent tendency to resort to violence, often with racial overtones—and a violence which possesses a kind of moral authority all its own.

The solutions tried up to now have been collectivist ones, so they have all failed. I believe we must now turn to entrepreneurial solutions and seek to use the problem-solving mechanism of market capitalism, which has never failed us yet, to provide the answers.

The need is urgent, because the problem is already reproducing itself at the international level. It is right, as I have argued, to press steadily for the expansion of free trade, and for the richer nations to finance training programs and other devices to make such expansion fair and profitable to all. The majority of the global population can be progressively drawn into such a system.

But it would be misleading to suggest that all the nations are at present eligible. Indeed an underclass of nations, mainly but not exclusively in Africa, is developing too. What we observe in large parts of Africa is what might be called the Haiti Syndrome: entities nominally classified as states which have virtually fallen out of the international economy and which seemingly cannot provide for their citizens elementary justice or allow them to provide for themselves the basic necessities of life. In many cases, the miseries of these underclass nations are envenomed by civil war and frontier disputes among themselves. As they are at present organized and governed, there is nothing that capitalism can do for them—and socialism, to which most have resorted, merely compounds their problems. Indeed such underclass states seem inevitably to attract the worst exponents both of capitalism at its most unscrupulous and socialism at its most destructive. Where lies the remedy? Indeed, is there a remedy?

Certainly there is no obvious remedy within the common assumptions of the late twentieth century—that all states, whatever their origins and nature, are equally sovereign. In the nineteenth century, the existence of such failed societies, with abysmally low and falling living standards exacerbated by chronic violence, would have attracted the attentions of one or other of the colonial powers. Sooner or later a colonial power would have moved in, from moral motives as well as from hope of commercial and political gain. That would be inconceivable now.

Or would it? Has not the failure of decolonization, in some areas at least, been as spectacular and tragic as the general failure of collectivism? And is it unthinkable to revive the notion of national trusteeship, once so important a part of the League of Nations' work in the 1920s and 1930s? And if trusteeship is a valid concept, worth discussing in the international context, is it, or something like it, a useful idea to mull over in the context of the intractable problem of the internal underclass?

What I am suggesting is that in exploring the future potentialities of the capitalist market system and in devising ways in which society can consolidate its moral acceptability, we should keep an open mind to fresh ideas. We are at the end of one ideological era, the era in which collectivism was tried and found wanting. One thing history surely teaches is that when old ideas die, others rush in to fill the vacuum. For men and women need ideas as much as they need food and drink. If sensible and creative ideas are not forthcoming, we can be certain that dangerous and destructive ones will emerge to exert their spell. It is essential that those of us whose roots are still within the Judeo-Christian system of ethics, who value freedom, who strive for the just society, and who recognize the enormous productive potential of market capitalism should be fertile in ideas in the coming battle for minds. For if we get the ideas right, the opportunities for mankind in the next century are almost without limit. FT

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The Importance of Being Catholic: A Protestant View

Stanley Hauerwas

(Editor's Note: This paper was originally given as the tenth Paul Wattson Lecture at the University of San Francisco, sponsored by the Franciscan Society of the Atonement.)

I Was a Communist for the FBI was the title of a popular book, movie, and television series of the 1950s. In a similar manner, for fourteen years I was a Protestant moral theologian, if not for the Roman Catholic Church, at least for some Catholics around the University of Notre Dame. There is a great deal of hubris in that claim; many Catholics, both at Notre Dame and elsewhere, would be quick to deny that they ever counted me among those holding the high office of moral theologian for the Church of Rome. No doubt they are right. At best I was a Christian ethicist who was graciously given the opportunity to live, work, discuss, argue, and, most importantly, worship with Roman Catholics. My stay with Roman Catholics left a mark on me for which I shall ever be grateful. I was given more than I ever got. I am, therefore, grateful for the opportunity to make some small contribution to the ongoing discussion among Roman Catholics about how to do moral theology and/or how to think and live as Catholics in the American context.

Of course, you really left yourself open when you invited me to address questions of ecumenical ethics. I did not spend fourteen years laboring in Roman Catholic vineyards for nothing. I learned a great deal while I was with you, and I have been dying to have an opportunity to unload on someone what I think I learned. It happens that this is the first such opportunity I have had since I left Notre Dame, so you are going to bear the brunt of it. You will get precisely what you do not need—unsolicited advice from a Protestant bystander, one who does not have to live under the discipline of what he advocates. My Roman Catholic friends often pointed out to me that I could be enthusiastic that Catholics at least had the sense to make authority an issue because I did not have to obey those who would exercise that authority.

That, of course, is a fair criticism. Yet it is also the case that, no doubt with a great deal of naivete, most of the time I was at Notre Dame I did not think of myself as a Protestant ethicist—I thought I was Catholic. This delusion at least partly derived from the fact that I was and am a Methodist, an ecclesial commitment I never got most of my Roman Catholic friends to appreciate since they assumed all Protestants were Baptists, especially if they were from the South. I could not convince them that on at least some readings Methodism is not a Protestant tradition but rather stands centrally in the Catholic tradition. Methodists indeed are even more Catholic than the Anglicans who gave us birth, since Wesley, of blessed memory, held to the Eastern fathers in a more determinative way than did any of the Western churches—Protestant or Catholic. Of course this account of Methodism has very little to do with the reality of the contemporary Methodist church, but it means a great deal to those of us who became Christians through the rediscovery of the Catholic substance of the Wesleys. We were committed to a rediscovery of the disciplined nature of the church and thought Wesley provided some important theological and institutional expression of that—or as someone put it, "If Wesley had not been Wesley he would have been Ignatius."

Stanley Hauerwas *is Professor of Theological Ethics at the Divinity School, Duke University. His most recent book is* Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony, *co-written with William Willimon.*

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Of course the other reason I thought I was a Catholic was I was trained at Yale. During my interview at Notre Dame I was asked what problems or difference I thought being a Protestant ethicist would create for my teaching. I replied I did not have the slightest idea because, having gone to Yale, I did not consider myself a Protestant theological ethicist. Aquinas was as much my theologian as he was for Catholics. (And Aquinas did not even know he was a Roman Catholic.) Moreover, I had been taught to regard the encyclical tradition as essential to any Christian theologian's work. Father Bernard Haering and Vatican II were part and parcel of my education.

To be sure, I did not know enough then to know what I did not know, but I soon found myself thoroughly pulled into the Catholic world and into Catholic moral theology in particular. I discovered that Catholicism was a world rich with textures and colors that I literally had not known existed. As a relatively homeless WASP, I felt I had discovered a community where moral discourse still mattered. What more could someone trained in ethics ask? Couple this with the extraordinary generosity of Catholics to welcome and put up with me—even to being willing to take me seriously—and it is natural that I thought I was a Catholic.

However, as one of my colleagues pointed out as I was leaving Notre Dame, I was mistaken ever really to think I was such. I had taken too seriously the idea that theology defined what made Catholics Catholic. Catholicism is more than "doctrine" and theological reflection on doctrine. Rather it is habits and practices that take a lifetime to understand. I appreciate that point. Indeed, it is one on which I want to draw: the point of my remarks is to urge Catholics to stay Catholic, even in America. I have begun with this personal word in the hopes that I will be received not entirely as an outsider, but as one who was and still is at least a little Catholic. But if not an outsider, I am a bystander: I want you to be better Catholics than I can or perhaps am prepared to be.

In that respect I suspect Catholics should be a bit suspicious of Protestants who are enthusiastic about the current possibilities of the Church of Rome. For example, Richard John Neuhaus in his wonderfully intriguing book, *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Post-Modern World*, cannot say enough in support of John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger. He castigates Catholic liberals for following Protestants whose theology has become but a form of anthropology. In this I must admit I am in deep sympathy with Neuhaus. Despairing of the incoherence of theological discourse in mainstream Protestantism, we cannot help but think that Catholicism still possesses enough substance to mount a good argument. As Neuhaus says, prior to Vatican II "the problems of Roman Catholicism were 'their' problems; now they are our problems."

> And, conversely, many of our problems have become theirs. The nature and mission of the Church, the relationship between Church and world, the role of Scripture and tradition, the question of teaching authority (the "magisterium") within the Christian community, the connection between teaching authority and theological exploration, the meaning of doctrine and dogma—the Roman Catholic Church is working through these questions on behalf of the entire Christian community. Of course there are other Christian communities addressing these questions. Some communities, however, are not capable of that. Much of liberal Protestantism has lost the points of reference, even the vocabulary, required for deliberation and debate on such questions. Most of conservative Protestantism, especially fundamentalist Protestantism, is not aware of the questions.

Catholics are suspicious of the Protestant enthusiasm for Catholicism that Neuhaus and I represent because many Catholics have spent their lives reacting against an authoritarian church. I am often sympathetic with such concerns, but those who hold them do not recognize that they rest on a false sense of security. The Church, it has been assumed, could be criticized because its structure would remain always in place—bishops would continue to be bishops, Rome would still be Rome. In like manner, the "old Catholic moral theology" could be criticized without fundamental challenge to the assumption that the distinction between moral theology and fundamental theology made sense—Catholic moral theology should no longer be "legalistic," but yet the structure of moral theology would remain in place. As a result of this blind spot, criticism of the Church too often has represented a distraction from the real business at hand—namely helping the church face the challenge of modernity. Catholics in the name of reform work to make the church conform to the norm of American democracy, failing to see that that cannot help but result in a church no longer capable of challenging the status quo. If I seem, therefore, too uncritical of Roman Catholicism, it is only because I have to live out the presuppositions of the alternative. However, let me try to make these remarks more concrete by attending to the question of ecumenical ethics.

II

Concern over issues of ethics and ecumenism has arisen because Catholics find themselves in a quandary raised by the issue of abortion. For example, Catholics in California would like to participate in the California Ecumenical Council, but the Council has taken a position that is pro-abortion, at least in terms of the public policy alternatives. The question

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seems to be how Catholics can continue to be good ecumenical citizens while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the Catholic moral position.

My personal response to the quandary is that I do not want you to be good ecumenical citizens—I want you to be Catholics. I also believe that there is nothing more important for the future unity of the church than for you to be Catholic. Unless you draw on the integrity of your hard-won wisdom about matters such as abortion, then you will have failed your calling to be the church that holds itself in judgment for the church's disunity. For I take it that inherent in the Roman Catholic commitment to the magisterial office is the willingness to see the divided nature of the church as a sign of Catholic unfaithfulness—you have failed to help us see why Christians who find ourselves separated from Rome should be what you think we should be. You have been so anxious to be like us you have failed in your ecumenical task to help us see what it means for any of us to be faithful to the Gospel on which our unity depends.

Of course, there is every reason for you to be confused about these matters. After all, it has been the strategy of most ecumenical movements in this century to concentrate on deeds rather than creeds. We assumed that there was little chance of reaching agreement in matters of belief, but at least we could join hands as people of good will to fight for justice, to protest on behalf of the oppressed, to stand for basic moral values. Such a stance seemed peculiarly well-suited to Catholicism, since your ethics was putatively based on natural law and thus did not require any special theological justification to be rendered intelligible. Therefore, unlike Protestant accounts of the moral life that, at least in theory, maintained a much tighter connection between theological conviction and moral behavior, Catholics seemed to have a moral tradition particularly well suited for ecumenical endeavors. It mattered not whether Protestants believed in the authority of the magisterial office or had a correct understanding of nature-grace. All that mattered was that Catholics and Protestants could agree that certain forms of behavior are incumbent on Christians and all other people of good will. We might not be able to agree about the status or nature of the sacraments, but at least we could agree that all Christians, Protestant and Catholic, ought to be for justice. If natural law means anything, it ought to mean that.

At a theoretical level this seems straightforward and clear. The problem, however, is that this kind of account of natural-law ethics failed to acknowledge or notice that in reality it presupposed a social order whose practices had been formed by Catholic habits. A story a Protestant observer at Vatican II told me nicely illustrates this. A bishop was overheard saying to his theological advisor, "Now explain to me again why only Catholics seem to believe contraception is wrong even though our position is based on natural-law reasoning common to all people."

It is tempting for me at this point to launch into a critique of certain kinds of natural-law accounts that seem to make theological claims secondary. Such accounts I think hardly do justice to Aquinas' understanding of the meaning or role of natural law. I look forward to the yet-to-be-written history that demonstrates how Aquinas' position was distorted by being read through the eyes of German idealistic philosophy. For Aquinas, natural law serves not as a principle that justifies a "universal ethic" abstracted from a community's practices or its members' character and virtues; rather natural law is a necessary exegetical principle for the reading of the Old Testament as well as helping us understand that when confronted by God's law, we always discover we are sinners. But though I am tempted to provide a theological account of natural law, I am going to refrain because my interests here are more properly described as a theological social commentary.

In an odd way, when Catholics came to America you learned—though it is not yet a lesson you have taken to heart—that your "natural-law" ethic was community- and tradition-specific. You came to America with a moral theology shaped by the presuppositions of Catholic Constantinianism. Natural law was the name you gave to the moral practices and principles you had discovered were essential to Christian living in that barbarian wilderness we now call Western Civilization. You could continue to believe in the theoretical validity of a natural-law ethic, even, or perhaps especially, one interpreted through Kantian eyes, as long as you saw the sociological and historical center of your life in Europe. After all, Protestantism, whether in its Lutheran, Calvinist, or Anglican forms, still had to make do with societies that had been formed Catholic—which is but a reminder that Protestantism remains both theologically and sociologically a parasitical form of the Christian faith. Without Catholicism, Protestants make no sense, a hard truth for Catholic and Protestant alike to acknowledge.

Yet everything changed when you came to America. By "came" I mean when Catholics took up the project of being Americans rather than Catholics who happened to live in America. For when you came to America for the first time, you had to live in a culture that was based on Protestant presuppositions and habits now transformed by Enlightenment ideologies. For the first time you had to live in a society that was putatively Christian and yet in which you were not "at home." The church knew how to live in cultures that were completely foreign—as in India and Japan—but how could you learn to live in America, a culture which at once looked Christian but seemed in certain ways more foreign than China?

It was a confusing challenge for Catholics. You came here with the habits and practices of a Constantinian ethic allegedly based on natural-law presumptions, and you discovered that to sustain those habits you

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had to act like a sect. Protestant Constantinianism forced Catholic Constantinians to withdraw into your own enclaves—your own ghettos—in order to maintain the presumption that you possessed an ethic based on natural-law grounds. What a wonderful thing God did to you. Contemplating it can only confirm what an extraordinary sense of humor God must possess.

For example, you came to America thinking that societies had the obligation to educate children about the true and the good. Yet confronted by supposedly neutral public education that presumed that everyone agreed that church and state ought to be separated, you were forced to build your own school system. Where else would Catholics learn that the life of the mind could not and should not be separated from the life of prayer?

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am aware that there were many reasons—not the least being a Protestant anti-Catholicism that is still more virulent that Catholics generally are willing to acknowledge—for Catholics to live in ghettos. Nor do I wish to invite you to wallow in romantic nostalgia for the both wonderful and terrible forms of life those ghettos produced. Rather, I simply want to call your attention to the sociological form that seemed necessary to sustain the Catholic project of a natural-law moral theology.

III

Of course, the problem for Catholics is no longer how to survive in a hostile environment dominated by Protestant and Enlightenment presuppositions. Now the great problem is how to survive liberal tolerance. Until recently, you could depend on Protestant prejudice to keep yourselves Catholic—it might not be clear what it meant to be Catholic, but at least you could depend on Protestants to remind you that you were peculiar. However, as Protestants have become increasingly unclear what it means to be Protestant, it has become equally difficult to know—at least in matters moral—what difference it makes to be Catholic. From a Protestant perspective, as long as we are characterized by a generalized uncertainty about what we are about, it seems only a matter of courtesy to invite Catholics to become part of our amorphous search for identity.

This is a particularly dangerous situation for everyone. Catholics desiring to show that they have a positive attitude toward Protestants end up telling Protestants what we already know—e.g., that moral matters such as abortion and divorce are extremely complex and that it is very hard to have predetermined moral stances about them. But if Catholics end up telling Protestants what they already know, consider the plight of Protestants. We end up telling secularists what they already know. Strange results for traditions that are called into the world on the presumption that they have something to say that the world needs to hear.

My worry, in short, is not that Catholics will fail to be ecumenical, but that when they come to cooperate with Protestants, they will have become what we already are—that is, a denomination. In his book *The Restructuring of American Religion*, Robert Wuthnow documents the decline of mainstream Protestantism in America. He confirms what I think many have sensed—that members of Protestant churches now concern themselves less with the particular theological and ecclesial heritage of their denomination than with how that religious organization provides a means for individuals to express their particular interests. Therefore, American Protestants are no longer determined by whether they are Presbyterians or Methodists, but by whether they are "conservatives" or "liberals" within their denominations. Moreover, the meaning of "conservative" and "liberal" is determined primarily in terms of the options of the American political system rather than by theological and moral questions.

This has not happened to American Protestantism by accident; it is rather the result of our success. Conservative and liberal Protestants might disagree about the divinity of Christ, but they were in agreement that there was a pivotal connection between personal faith and the larger society. They assumed, as Wuthnow summarizes the matter, that a healthy society depends on its members acting responsibly to uphold moral and political values, and that such responsible behavior is best supported by a sense of individual accountability to the divine and by the sanctions, positive and negative, that religion provides.

In our current context this sounds remarkably conservative, so it is easy to overlook the assumption that the primary social task of mainstream Protestantism was to create and sustain a society that provided freedom for the individual. Wuthnow suggests, therefore, that it is the supermarket with its myriad consumer products more than the traditional flag-waving Fourth of July parade that has become the symbol of freedom. "Freedom means the opportunity to choose from a variety of products, to select a full complement of goods that meet our individual needs and desires. It means having the financial resources with which to purchase any gadget of seeming use in our quest for personal development and self-expression"—and, of course, it means freedom to choose our "faith."

In short, Protestantism helped create, but even more, legitimate a form of social life that undermined its ability to maintain the kind of disciplined communities necessary to sustain the church's social witness. As James Gustafson noted over twenty years ago, movement from the "gathered church" to the voluntary church almost irresistibly involves a compromised ecclesiastical form. The decisive criterion for the latter is no longer holiness of life, but "the will to belong."

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> The theological and experiential marks of authority on which the in-group was defined from the out-group have lost their power. The zest for purity in the churches has given way to an acceptance of the impossibility of its achievement, and consequently to a more or less open membership. Now, instead of being gathered out of the body of strangers into the family of saints, the strangers volunteer to join the community of those like themselves, who find something meaningful in religious life for themselves, their children, or their neighborhood. Men admire the saints among them, and perhaps wish to join their small number. If they fail, however, there is no serious disruption of church life.

The process described here is now taking place among Roman Catholics. You are becoming like Protestants, one denomination among others. No true church here, but rather one more association of people who at best share a common search for meaning. No doubt there is little you can do about this, as you are subject to economic and social forces that make this process almost inevitable. What I find odd, however, is that the kind of moral theology you are generating in the name of freedom underwrites this process as a good.

IV

Let me turn at last to issues I suspect you wanted me to address in the first place—namely, how should Catholic moral theology be done if Catholics are to be full participants in ecumenical dialogue and action? I have not begun with that question because I think it makes little sense to try to answer it in the abstract. The question only makes sense in the context of the forces that have produced it. Moreover, it is exactly those forces that make the question of how Catholics relate to Protestants of relatively little moment compared to the issue of how Catholics and Protestants alike can maintain communities in the American context capable of disciplined moral discourse as Christians.

Yet it is exactly that challenge that most Catholic moral theologians, whether of the left or the right, fail to make central to their work. Catholics on the left want the church to be a morally disciplined community in order to speak in a determinative fashion about war and economic justice, but they prefer that it speak less decisively about abortion, contraception, and divorce. Catholics on the right want the church to speak decisively about abortion, sexual ethics, and divorce, but with some reticence about war and economic justice. One would think that this difference would be the result of some fundamental disagreements about the substance of moral theology, but I think that is not the case. Rather I fear this kind of dispute reflects a church that has already lost its theological moorings for ethical reflection.

Indeed I want to put the issue in even starker fashion. I would maintain that the natural-law basis of Catholic moral theology was insufficient to prepare Catholics for the challenge of negotiating a society like America. As a result, disputes between conservative Catholic moral theologians and liberal Catholic moral theologians do little to help Catholics locate the challenge they faced and continue to face in America. For natural law underwrote the assumption that Catholic moral theology could be written for anyone irrespective of his or her relation to the faith in Jesus of Nazareth. But that "anyone" in America turned out to be the "individual" of the Enlightenment, whose very being depended on the refusal to acknowledge or spell out a particular history.

Thus Catholic moral theologians have embraced the American project as part and parcel of what it means to do faithful moral theology. For example, consider some of the titles of recent works by Catholic moralists—Charles Curran, *American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*; John Coleman, *An American Strategic Theology*; David Hollenbach, *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights: American Catholic Social Ethics in a Pluralist Context;* Dennis McCann, *New Experiment in Democracy: The Challenge of American Catholicism;* Joe Holland and Anne Barsanti, eds., *American and Catholic: The New Debate;* and George Weigel, *Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy*. It would be a mistake, of course, to read too much into titles, but it is at least interesting that Catholic thinkers seem to think that Catholicism can and should be modified by the designation "American."

This emphasis on "American" might be interpreted in a purely descriptive manner meant to denote the unavoidability of the American reality. No doubt at times it does mean simply that. Yet it also means more, as there is the suggestion, not only in these authors but in American Catholic moral theology in general, that "American" is a normative recommendation that should change how moral theology is done. Moreover, it is a recommendation that is in continuity with the deepest well-spring of past Roman Catholic moral theology—namely, that grace completes nature and thus moral theology can be based on the assumption that there is no fundamental tension between a general societal ethos and specifically Catholic moral conviction.

For example, Dennis McCann in his *New Experiment in Democracy* argues that the Americanist heresy condemned by *Testem benevolentiae* was not a heresy at all. Rather Americanism

> is not shameful "indulgence" but, as Max Stackhouse has... pointed out, "a liberation to new duty given by the grace of God, which leads to voluntary community, disciplined personal

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> life, lay intellectuality, and social outreach." Indeed, as Leo XIII feared, this liberation is a liberation from the church; but he failed to grasp the Americanists' hope that such a liberation also occurs for the sake of the church. At stake in the "certain liberty" for which Americanists stand condemned is, in Stackhouse's terms, the revolutionary American principle of "self-governing association" and its extension to all the institutional sectors of society. America thus is an experiment in which the basic, primordial freedom of the church to order its own life is taken as the basis for the organization of political, economic, educational, familial, and other aspects of life.

The only difficulty, according to McCann, is that the "certain liberty" valued by Isaac Hecker and later by John Courtney Murray has not been fully realized by the church's "search for self-identity" after Vatican II. Yet McCann is convinced that the future is with the Americanist, as it is the "consistent tendency of Catholics to define their own integrity in terms of this nation's ongoing experiment in 'self-governing association.' In this sense the Americanist heresy is rooted in the very foundations of Christianity in this country, a heritage common to the whole spectrum of American Protestant and Catholic communities of faith. It has become, and inevitably must become, the agenda for American Catholicism whenever Catholic people consider fully the logic of their circumstances here—how it is that their habitual patterns of organizing themselves for participation in our common life are religiously significant." McCann thus argues that it is the task of the future not only to make America more American by fuller institutionalization of that "certain liberty," but to make the church itself American by transforming it into the kind of voluntary, self-governing institution characteristic of American life.

According to McCann, the primary virtue for a church so constituted, internally and externally, is civility. Appealing to Murray, McCann suggests that civility should be understood as "a disposition to conduct politics not as open warfare among conflicting interest groups, but as skilled and self-disciplined public 'conversations.' " As such, civility is not just a political necessity, but a religious virtue.

> Its faithful exercise makes each of the communities participating in the American "public church," as well as their respective members, more disposed to regard each other in public as mutually interdependent, as bound to each other, in Martin Marty's terms, "by explicit or tacit agreement to mutual communication of whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life...." "Civility" thus is the ecumenical virtue *par excellence*; for in our pluralistic context, it is an indispensable precondition for building the Kingdom of God in America. Pluralism may exist without "civility," but a pluralistic society cannot if it lacks the sense of social interdependence which this virtue fosters among diverse communities who, both because of and in spite of their differences, remain pledged to one another for the sake of the common good.

I must admit I thought that after John Murray Cuddihy's *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity*, no one would be able to recommend civility without apology again. For as Cuddihy points out, civility is that part of the modernization process that requires the separation of private affect from public demeanor. It is the great bourgeois project to adapt the individual's inner life to the socially appropriate.

> "Niceness" is as good a name as any for the informally yet pervasively institutionalized civility expected—indeed required—of members (and of aspirant members) of that societal community called the civic culture. Intensity, fanaticism, inwardness—too much of anything, in fact—is unseemly and bids fair to destroy the fragile solidarity of the surface we call civility. Civility, as the very medium of Western social interaction, presupposes the differentiated structures of a modernizing "civil society." Civility is not merely regulative of social behavior; it is an order of "appearance" constitutive of that behavior. This medium is itself the message and the message it beamed to the frontrunners of a socially emancipating Jewry came through loud and clear: "Be Nice." "The Jews," writes Maurice Samuel looking back on the epoch of Emancipation, "are probably the only people in the world to whom it has ever been proposed that their historic destiny is—to be nice."

Of course, you may well object that being nice is not a bad alternative to being killed. But if Cuddihy is right that the "tribal, rather than the civil, nature of Jewish culture" means that Jewish Emancipation put Jews on a collision course with the differentiation of Western society, then the Holocaust is but the other side of assimilation into the new and oppressive order of civility.

> The differentiations most foreign to the *shtetl* subculture of *Yiddesheit* were those of public from private behavior and of manners from morals. Jews were being asked, in effect, to become bourgeois, and to become bourgeois quickly. The problem of behavior, then, became strategic to the whole problematic of "assimi-

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> lation." The modernization process, the civilization process, and the assimilation process were experienced as one—as the "price of admission" to the bourgeois civil societies of the West at the end of the nineteenth century.

It may well be unfair to juxtapose Cuddihy's account of civility to that of McCann's. McCann would certainly protest that he is concerned to save particularity in the name of healthy pluralism. But it is not enough to affirm pluralism. You must be able to show, given the context of the Enlightenment ideology and institutions indicated by Cuddihy, that the forces of modernity which grind all genuine disputes into calm "conversations" can be resisted.

Nor is it enough to appeal, as McCann and Hollenbach do, to "justice as participation," as if the very evocation of that phrase represents a coherent social theory or policy. Hollenbach, for example, notes that the disagreements between John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Michael Sandel, and Michael Walzer concerning justice might represent to some a vindication of Alasdair MacIntyre's and my analysis of the moral anarchy of our society and our allegedly sectarian social strategy. But rather than a confusion about justice, according to Hollenbach, what we have is the beginning of a genuine argument about justice. We do so, that is, if we realize "that there is not one meaning to justice in some univocal sense."

> All of the interlocutors in the current disputation have got their hands on some part of the reality we are in search of. Socrates knew this phenomenon well: dialectic, that is argument, is a process of sorting through a host of opinions to discern what is true in each, in search of that which is most true, most good. The argument about what justice means is as old as Western civilization. The quality of the argument today may well determine whether this civilization has a future, or whether its future will be in any sense civilized. In the face of these high stakes, I think the sectarian retreat of MacIntyre and Hauerwas is ultimately, if unwittingly, a failure of nerve. It fails to appreciate new possibilities present today for expressing love of one's neighbor by engaging in the long march of cultural transformation.

"Justice as participation" turns out to be another way to say Catholics should be good Americans.

Of course, I do not mean to imply that everyone who calls for an "American Catholic moral theology" agrees with McCann's and Hollenbach's understanding of that project (indeed, I assume that there are significant differences between the two of them). In particular, I find John Coleman to be especially sensitive to the challenge facing American Catholicism. As he notes, "What seems abundantly clear is that the American Catholic Church cannot have its cake and eat it too. It cannot hunger after unitary prophetic strategies which presuppose authoritarian patterns within a largely hierarchical church or a restricted lay autonomy and, simultaneously, foster a human relations and voluntary model premised on pluralism and a personal freedom.... It [the church] cannot accept the game of pluralism and still expect to impose its unique agenda on the societal outcomes." Coleman thus urges the church to explore all the creative possibilities of the human relations and voluntary model of the church, even if it might thereby risk being captured by a class-based moral consensus. As he puts it, "with the collapse of the immigrant church and the increasing education of American Catholics, the church is fated to that model in America"—a sobering prediction indeed.

At stake in these sociological observations is not only the question of the church's accommodation to this society, but the further question of how moral rationality is understood and practiced. For in the interest of joining the arguments about such matters as abortion, the church is tempted to underwrite those forms of Enlightenment rationalism that deny their traditioned character. Catholics, more than any other people, must resist the presumption of modernity that those from other traditions are "really just like us" since we can make their behavior intelligible because we putatively speak a universal language. What must be faced up to is that Catholics and non-Catholics live in different worlds. That is why Christians finally do not seek to convince the other, we seek to convert. These are complex matters involving questions of relativism and truth that cannot be explored here. Suffice it to say, however, that at least one of the signs of the truth of the Catholic faith is its unwillingness to substitute the reality of the church for insubstantial universal reasons for knowing and worshiping God rightly.

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I am aware that I have said little about how abortion fits into this picture. Indeed, it may seem I have said little about moral theology at all, but have instead only been talking about the historical and sociological situation of Catholicism in America. Some might suspect that I have seized the opportunity to criticize the Americanism of Catholic social ethics—to suggest that there is nothing wrong with Catholics that could not be fixed by overcoming the temptation to be "nice"—in order simply to defend my own "sectarianism."

Yet I do think that what I have said is important for how Catholics think about abortion as well as for how they articulate their concern about abortion to the wider society. Michael Schwartz has persuasively argued in an essay in *American and Catholic: The New Debate* that abortion has become the test case for the

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honeymoon between "Americanist Catholics—who are usually well educated and upwardly mobile—and the secular culture to which they have surrendered." These are the Catholics particularly subject to the paradoxical attitude that secular culture has adopted toward post-conciliar Catholicism. That is,

> Catholicism is still despised to the extent that it claims to teach with authority, but that contempt is no longer mixed with fear, only with condescension. The pope is unable to assert his authority effectively over even the clergy, much less the laity. And so we have the new strain of anti-Catholic sentiment expressing itself by praising those Catholics who separate themselves from the beliefs and practices of their church. To the extent that the reality of the church is despised, so individual Catholics who subordinate their Catholicism to some secular ideology are held up as models of intellectual honesty, courage, and all-around decency. The only good Catholic, it would seem, is a bad Catholic.

Schwartz observes, however, that for such Catholics a crisis was occasioned exactly when their "new-found ecumenical friends decided that the next great step in the advance of civilization was to authorize the killing of babies. We were tolerant, and we desperately wanted to be accepted. But we were still Catholics, not barbarians. We drew the line at murdering the young." In opposition to those in power, Catholics knew this was not just another question to be resolved by interest-group politics. Catholics knew they had a duty to stand for life, to choose, as Schwartz puts it, Christ over Caesar.

This seems to me to put the issue just right. The point of my argument is that opposition to abortion involves much more than just opposition to abortion. It in fact does nothing less than to put Catholics at odds with the primary ethos of the liberal culture that has just accepted you. To be against abortion means that politics as usual—to be for or against George Bush—is no longer possible. Schwartz understands what is at stake.

> The unfortunate truth is that most Catholics in America look to something other than the church for their basic direction in life. There are among us today people who call themselves Catholics but who are, above all, something else: feminists, Marxists, Republicans, evolutionists, pacifists, or whatever. Not everything in these ideologies is in conflict with Catholicism, and not everything in them is in harmony with Catholicism. But where these secular ideologies are in conflict with Catholicism, those who have placed their faith elsewhere insist that the church must change to conform itself to the higher truth proclaimed by the ideology of their choice. [But] no secular ideology can save. None of them, ultimately, is the truth. Only the Catholic faith answers the hunger of the human heart. Only the Catholic faith is true. Only the Catholic faith can bring us to the wholeness which consists in seeing God as God really is. It is not, I am saying, the church which must change to accommodate to the things of the world, but the world that must be transformed, folded under the mantle of the Bride of Christ.

I have resisted using this occasion to critique the methodology of past Roman Catholic moral theology except for offering a few generalizations about natural law as the presumed starting point for Catholic reflection. But if Schwartz is right, as I think he is, it means that moral theology cannot be divorced from those practices and virtues that derive their intelligibility from theological convictions. After all, Catholic convictions about abortion have never been derived from abstract principles about the "right to life," but rather have been rational just to the extent that Catholic people were formed by practices that made them a community capable of welcoming children. What is "natural" about that is that it is the way we were created—which is a claim about "nature" that unavoidably requires acknowledgement that there is a creator.

As a way to make these issues concrete, let me suggest a different way to test the issue of ecumenical ethics. Rather than thinking about how Catholics can participate in the California Council of Churches, ask whether the bishops ought to commend to all Catholic people participation in Operation Rescue.

There is a test for you. You would have to associate with the most despised of our society—Bible-believing fundamentalists—in non-violent action. It would be good for you to have to deal with people who take the Bible seriously. An article by Charlotte Low Allen in the *Wall Street Journal* (December 8, 1988) describes tensions between Catholics and Protestants already active in the movement and thereby suggests my point.

> Evangelicals rely exclusively on the Bible for moral authority. "I don't see how someone could believe abortion is murder without believing in the Bible," says Michael Hersh, director of Operation Rescue in Atlanta. This can be disconcerting for those who believe abortion violates natural law as well. Catholics have a long tradition of incorporating natural law principles into their theology, which makes it easier for them to discourse on moral issues with Jews, atheists, and other non-Catholics.

Yes, far too easy, and serious engagement with fundamentalist Protestants might afford a wonderful opportunity for you to rediscover the richness of being Catholic and in so doing help call us all to the unity of God's good kingdom. Such are the paradoxical blessings of particularity. FT

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The Way They Were, The Way We Are: Bioethics and the Holocaust

Richard John Neuhaus

To inquire into connections between the Holocaust and bioethical debates today assumes a hopeful estimate of the human capacity for reasonable discourse. Perhaps too hopeful. In the view of many, any suggestion that there may be analogies between the way they were and the way we are, between what they did and what we are doing and proposing to do, is simply intolerable. The very suspicion of such similarities is too painful to bear. As Eliot observes in *Murder in the Cathedral,* "Human kind cannot bear very much reality."

Reasonable discourse requires a measure of dispassion, a critical distancing of ourselves from our emotions, intentions, and interests. This is not easy for any of us, and the higher the stakes the more strongly are our defensive resources engaged. The stakes in the debates under discussion are very high indeed: Who shall live? Who shall die? Who does, and who does not, belong to the community for which we accept common responsibility? Most of us want to defend most particularly our intentions, our inward dispositions. We may acknowledge that we make mistakes, even that we have done the wrong thing, but we adamantly insist that we meant to do good. If we do not exercise care, reasonable discourse about right and wrong can easily be swamped by the language of intentionality.

Please note that I am here using the term "Holocaust" inclusively in order to cover the constellation of crimes against humanity that we associate with the Third Reich. Of course the term is often used to refer only to the genocide against the Jews. But in that limited sense the Holocaust has little relevance to bioethical debates today. Nobody of influence in our society, thank God, is proposing the elimination of Jews. Nor, we do well to remember, did the Nazis one day up and decide it would be a great idea to kill six million Jews, and millions of other "subhuman" human beings. The way to crimes against humanity was prepared by peculiar ways of thinking about humanity. As Richard Weaver famously insisted, "Ideas have consequences." The Holocaust was, in largest part, the consequence of ideas about human nature, human rights, the imperatives of history and scientific progress, the character of law, the bonds and obligations of political community. It is above all in the exploration of ideas that we can most usefully discuss the metaphors and analogies between then and now.

Please note also—and this must be said most emphatically—the present essay is an exploration and not an accusation. The purpose is to examine the value judgments and moral reasonings that inform current debates and practices, and to reflect on their similarities and dissimilarities with the Holocaust. If I suggest that a certain line of reasoning is disturbingly reminiscent of the Holocaust, I am not suggesting that those who think that way are morally equivalent to the perpetrators of the Holocaust. The stipulation throughout is that all the participants in current debates intend to do good and not evil.

The focus here is on ideas and their use as justifying rationales for doing this or that. The debates will continue and, if they are to be both civil and clarifying debates, it is important that we not impugn the motives of those with whom we disagree. Intentions are not everything, but neither are they nothing. The present examination is for each of us also a self-examination. It assumes that, as we believe ourselves to be capable of great good, we know we are also capable of great evil, our intentions notwithstanding. If that assumption is not shared, this discussion is, in the dismissive sense of the term, no more than an academic exercise. If we know in advance that we could not and will not commit crimes against humanity, the question posed by this essay has already been answered and we could stop right here.

Richard John Neuhaus *is Editor-in-Chief of* First Things. *This essay is based on a paper delivered to a conference on Bioethics and the Holocaust sponsored by the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Minnesota.*

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One kind of reaction to the question posed is described by two participants in last year's National Institutes of Health panel on fetal transplantation. Their minority report (*This World,* Summer 1989) observes, "Another vindication of fetal research with aborted tissue was grounded on the assumption that our inward dispositions alone determine the ethical value of our behavior. Several senior research sponsors expressed to the Panel their indignation that the work to which they had dedicated years of good will could be considered exploitative. They resented having their integrity appraised by reference to anything but their good intentions." As we shall see, this very insistence upon the sufficiency of intention has its counterpart in the experience of the Holocaust.

Our subject is the way they were and the way we are, what they did and what we are doing and proposing to do. The question is one of likenesses and unlikenesses, of similarities and dissimilarities, between then and now. A prior question concerns the very legitimacy of inquiring into comparisons between the Holocaust and present developments in bioethics. I believe that such an inquiry is not only legitimate but necessary. It is morally imperative that all of us who live after the Holocaust examine ourselves and our actions by reference to that moment of awesome truth.

The invocation of the Holocaust must be undertaken with most particular caution and clarity. For those of us in the West, the Holocaust is probably the only culturally available icon of absolute evil. Any "revisionist" efforts to deny or diminish the horror of the Holocaust are, quite rightly, deemed to be beyond the pale of responsible discourse. It is not only the so-called revisionists, however, who distort the Holocaust and its continuing pertinence. There are those who insist upon the uniqueness, the utter singularity, of the Holocaust in a manner that consigns it to the unusable past. If the Holocaust is like nothing else, it is relevant to nothing else.

As we must attend to similarities between then and now, we must also attend to dissimilarities. There are dangers in universalizing or generalizing the Holocaust in ways that obscure the historical particularity of the event and that obscure, as well, the particular ideas, decisions, actions, and attitudes that are the parts that make up the whole of what we call the Holocaust. We intend to honor the victims when we speak of the "six million" or the "ten million," but both killed and killers should, as much as possible, be recalled by name, for they had names. The Holocaust was not the abstraction we call a period of history but a succession of mornings and afternoons and evenings, much like this day. It was a tangled combination of innumerable actions and consequences, of careers and ambitions, of fears and loyalties, of flirtations with the unthinkable turning into the routines of the unexceptionable. To most of those involved, the icon of evil did not present itself whole. It happened an hour at a time, an equivocation at a time, a lie at a time, a decision at a time, a decision evaded at a time. There is great wisdom in Hannah Arendt's description of the Holocaust in terms of "the banality of evil."

A generalized Holocaust is deprived of its power to caution and instruct. A generalized Holocaust is a depersonalized Holocaust, replacing persons with statistics, with allegedly inexorable forces of history. Raskolnikov, the murderer in *Crime and Punishment,* well understood the uses of generalization. "Anyway, to hell with it! Let them [die]! That's how it should be, they say. It's essential, they say, that such a percentage should every year go—that way—to the devil—it's essential so that the others should be kept fresh and healthy and not be interfered with. A percentage! What fine words they use, to be sure! So soothing. Scientific. All you have to do is say 'percentage' and all your worries are over. Now, of course, if you used some other word—well, then perhaps it would make you feel a little uncomfortable."

The discussion at hand would be a failure were we not made to feel uncomfortable. The more subtle truth is that it would be an even greater failure were we made to feel more comfortable because we feel uncomfortable. Our discomfort testifies to our moral integrity, or so we like to think. The suspicion is not entirely unwarranted that the relatively new profession of bioethics was established to cater to our discomfort and thus to relieve our discomfort. There are things we would not do without professional permission; what is morally doubtful must be certified by expertly guided anguish. In connection with so many life-and-death questions today we hear much talk about difficult and anguishing decisions. Anguish, it seems, covers a multitude of sins. In pondering analogies with the Holocaust, we may be inclined to think that this is what distinguishes us from them: we know what we are doing, we recognize and openly discuss the potential risks and potential wrongs, and our decisions are accompanied by the prescribed quota of anguish.

Please do not misunderstand. The emergence of the profession of bioethics does testify to our culture's moral sensitivity. Maybe the profession has prevented and will prevent moral enormities that might otherwise be perpetrated. With respect to what was not thought before, or with respect to what was thought and thought to be unthinkable before, bioethics may be producing more preventions than permissions. I do not know, and I do not know if such a calculation is even possible. Would developments similar to those of the Holocaust be better kept at bay were there no discipline called bioethics? That is eminently debatable. Is professional bioethics in any sense an independent variable, so to speak, or simply the mistress of the "hard" disciplines it is employed to serve? Again, I do not know, although I know and am encouraged by the fact that there are those in the field who are

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not indifferent to these questions about their work.

I am reliably informed that the most typical Jewish telegram reads: "Start worrying. Letter to follow." One does not have to be Jewish to recognize that worry and anguish can be signs of health. With respect to current and proposed medical and biological practices, the letter is arriving page by page and we know that there is a good deal to worry about. It is easy to be alarmist; it is easier still to deny that there is cause for alarm. I am convinced that there are unmistakable similarities between what they did then and what we are doing now. They too asked and answered the question, Who shall live and who shall die? And, Who belongs to the community entitled to our protection? Then and now, the subject at hand is killing, and letting die, and helping to die, and using the dead. Then and now, the goal is to produce healthier human beings and, perhaps, a better quality of human being.

It will not do to say that the difference is that our intentions are good while theirs were evil or that they were cruel and callous while we are sensitive and caring. Good intentions and delicate sensibilities are not moral arguments. Anyone familiar with the literature of the Holocaust knows all too well how its perpetrators invoked good intentions and evidences of moral sensitivity to justify their actions, both during and after the fact. We are inclined to dismiss such appeals as smarmy sentimentality and self-serving rationalization, and understandably so. But it is not always sufficiently clear on what grounds we so easily dismiss their justifications, thus denying any similarity between them and us. Sometimes we seem to be saying that we are not like them because we are not like them. Obviously, that tautology does not satisfy.

We earnestly say, "Never Again!" It would make no sense to say "Never Again!" unless we believed that it could happen again. With the cry "Never Again!" we aim to stir our society from the smug and irrational confidence that it cannot happen here. Of course then is not now, and there is not here, and they are not us. If or when it happens again, we will, to paraphrase Mr. Sinatra's song, do it our way. Since those who do it may continue to be in charge, since there may never be the equivalent of the Nuremberg trials, it will be called not Holocaust but Progress. We need never fear the charge of crimes against humanity so long as we hold the power to define who does and who does not belong to "humanity."

Emil Fackenheim has wisely said, "We must grant Hitler no posthumous victories." It would seem to follow that we must not grant Hitler the posthumous victory of hiding from ourselves what we are capable of doing, what we may already be doing. Elie Wiesel has written, "If we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.... I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim." The use of the first person plural, "we," underscores the fact of moral agency, and moral responsibility. The Holocaust began in depersonalizing the victims and ended in depersonalizing the perpetrators. The decisions and actions that we are discussing here are not undertaken by the "logic of history," nor by "medical science," nor by "technological progress," nor by "the imperatives of research." They are undertaken by us, the first person plural composed of first persons singular. Moral agents have names. To seek escape in anonymity, to blame forces beyond our control for decisions within our control, is already to have granted Hitler a posthumous victory.

Samuel and Pearl Oliner recently published a book that, in my judgment, has not received the attention it deserves. *The Altruistic Personality* is based upon in-depth interviews with hundreds of people who, at great risk to their own lives and the lives of their families, rescued Jews from the Holocaust. The Oliners ask what distinguished the rescuers from the overwhelming majority of people who averted their eyes from what was happening, or were actively complicit in what afterwards were called crimes against humanity. Their conclusion is that the rescuers were distinguished not by their educational level, nor by their political views, nor by any other number of variables that might be supposed. They were not even distinguished by their attitudes toward Jews as such.

They were different in two critical respects. They typically had strong ties to communities that espoused rather straightforward and unsophisticated understandings of right and wrong. And they uniformly had an unquenchable sense of personal moral agency. One after another, they told the Oliners that they could not have lived with themselves—and, many added, they could not have answered to God—if they had not done what they had done.

They had been told that what was happening was not their responsibility, that an entirely new situation demanded anguishing decisions that could no longer be avoided, that scientific and historical necessity required a rethinking of familiar values, that traditional views had to give way to the inexorable course of progress, that short-term sacrifices of customary ways was the price of long-term advancement, and that, in any event, people wiser than themselves had thought these things through with great care, and who were they to challenge the experts and those in authority? All this they were told, and all this they refused to believe. They refused to surrender their knowledge of moral agency. As many would still say today, they refused to surrender their souls. They refused to grant Hitler that victory.

In the debate over abortion there has been much discussion surrounding "the seamless garment" as a metaphor for the so-called "life issues." I will not here enter into that debate within a debate, except to note that evil, like good, does seem to weave a pattern.

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We are considering here the finished pattern that we call the Holocaust. The finished product may not be seamless, there are disruptions and disjunctions here and there, but the end result is of a piece. And so it is with current debates in bioethics.

Consider, for instance, the NIH panel on fetal transplantation. The majority report is touchingly eager in its insistence that fetal transplantation should be and can be separated from the question of abortion. Commenting on the statement of Elie Wiesel cited above, the minority report says: "Wiesel is saying that even by acquiescent silence after the fact we can sign on as parties to a deed already done. But what we are considering here is no mere *post mortem* silence, no simple averting of the gaze after the fact. We are considering an institutional partnership, federally sponsored and financed, whereby the bodily remains of abortion victims become a regularly supplied medical commodity."

The minority makes a convincing case, I believe, that the majority deludes itself if it really thinks that the question of fetal transplants can be isolated from the question of how the fetuses are obtained. The minority report, written by James Bopp and James Burtchaell, points out that fetal transplantation would almost certainly increase the number of abortions, compound the collusion between medical healing and medicalized killing, and prepare the way for other steps that would not only parallel but replicate actions associated with the Holocaust. In an important sense, this minority report is saying nothing new. Dr. Johnson famously observed that mankind needs less to be instructed than to be reminded. In this instance, we need to be reminded of the War Crimes Trial in Nuremberg known as "The Medical Case."

That trial produced the Nuremberg Code of 1946 that began to provide protection for human subjects of research and inspired, in due course, the Declarations of Helsinki in 1964 and 1975. The minority report observes, "Without Nuremberg and its judgment the world's conscience might never have gazed head on at the intrinsic depravity of the doctor's defense.... The insight of Nuremberg taught us that when we take possession of others, when their bodies are forcibly delivered up to be used as we wish, then no antecedent good will and no subsequent scientific yield will absolve us from having been confederates in their oppression.... The Nazi doctors had learned the ethic of their profession: that a physician may not relieve one human being's affliction at the cost of another fellow human's suffering. But they contrived to believe that if an associate had already done the subjugating and they then did the healing-oriented research, they could divide the responsibility down the middle. The Tribunal and the world judged otherwise—and condemned the researchers for it all."

The chief defendant at Nuremberg, the notorious Dr. Karl Brandt, had once hoped to join Dr. Albert Schweitzer in his humanitarian work in Africa. He testified to the court of his great anguish in having to do things in the "interests of the community" when confronted by the "hard necessity" of finding ways to protect the population against death and epidemics. Toward that end, the State, the "law of the land," gave him permission to experiment on human subjects put at his disposal. Dr. Brandt declared, "There is no prohibition against daring to progress."

We should not avoid asking ourselves the painfully obvious question: Do we now think that the judgment at Nuremberg was in error? Was the "doctor's defense" right after all? Should the Dr. Brandts of the Holocaust have been acquitted? There are many today who seem to be answering those questions in the affirmative, at least by implication. More commonly, they condemn what the doctors did then while approving what the doctors do now, without addressing the differences between then and now in principle, actual practice, or justifying rationale. When challenged on the similarities between then and now, many of our contemporaries are reflexively offended by the suggestion that such a comparison might even be thought worthy of consideration.

A rabbinical dictum has it that we should "place fences around the law." The idea is that restraints and prohibitions should be in place to prevent us from reaching, or at least impede our progress toward, the point of absolute and damning transgression. There should at least be safety rails around the abyss. Perhaps the best that our culture can provide are signposts warning against the danger ahead. The judgment at Nuremberg was such a signpost. It is no longer secure. Perhaps the signpost has been taken down. The Hippocratic Oath was another such signpost. It was. Leon Kass of the University of Chicago has written persuasively about the ominous implications in current revisions of and, in effect, abandonments of the Hippocratic Oath in medical schools today. When the fences and the safety rails have been removed, when the signposts have been changed or taken down, what reason is there to believe that people in our time will not do what was done then? The confidence that they will not, it is to be feared, is based on little more than sentimental naivete and the unseemly *hubris* of our assumed moral superiority to "them."

But now, it may be objected, the introduction of the issue of fetal transplants and its connection with abortion has turned the discussion toward a subject that some would prefer to avoid, namely abortion. It is said that the important debates in bioethics must move "beyond" the question of abortion. The abortion debate is weary, and we have no doubt all been wearied by it. What that is new could possibly be said in the abortion debate? Perhaps nothing. But again we are reminded of Dr. Johnson's axiom that we have more need to be reminded than to be instructed—or than to be engaged by "new insights." Whether by inherent logic or by historical accident, almost every contro-

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verted question in bioethics is entangled with the question of abortion. Again and again, we discover that we cannot go around, but must once more go through, the abortion debate. Before us are questions about who shall live and who shall die; questions about killing, letting die, helping to die, and using the dead; questions about what or who belongs to the community of legal protection—and when a "what" becomes a "who," and when, at the end of life, a "who" becomes a "what."

Even if some of the great questions that occupy bioethics might theoretically be isolated from the question of abortion, they seldom can be in cultural and political fact. Whether by inherent logic or by historical accident, the abortion debate has become the magnet to which all the other life-and-death debates are attached. We can try to pull them away from that debate, but they are inexorably drawn back to it. Leaving aside for the moment the prochoice arguments in favor of the abortion liberty, it is clear that great science-based industries, trajectories of medical experimentation, and perhaps the profession of bioethics itself rest in large part upon the settlement articulated in *Roe v. Wade* and related decisions. It is equally clear that that settlement is today no longer settled. In ways even more relentless and entangled than at present, arguments about what we insist are "other" questions will be emerging from and returning to the question of abortion. A measure of moral clarity and societal consensus can only be achieved on the far side of the abortion debate, and that far side is not yet within sight.

Those who support the abortion liberty are understandably outraged when their opponents compare the more than 25 million abortions since *Roe v. Wade* with the Holocaust. And it must be noted that the Holocaust is often invoked recklessly and unfeelingly by anti-abortionists, as though it were simply another convenient stick with which to beat the opposition. In such cases, the only culturally available icon of absolute evil—a precious thing for any culture to possess—is dangerously debased. At the same time, however, we must ask: *If* one believes that 25 million abortions are equivalent to 25 million instances of the taking of innocent human life, does not the analogy with the Holocaust become more appropriate? Perhaps even inevitable? The cultural and political reality is that millions of Americans, a majority of Americans, believe that abortion is precisely that—the taking of an innocent human life. The same Americans are not in agreement on what that perception of reality should mean in terms of abortion law, but, if we believe in a society governed by democratic discourse and decision, that perception of reality and the consideration of its legal ramifications cannot be ruled out of order.

One of the lawyers who prosecuted the Nazis in the war crimes trials explained how people could have acted so savagely: "There is only one step to take. You may not think it possible to take it; but I assure you that men I thought decent men did take it. You have only to decide that one group of human beings have lost human rights." But, the objection is heard, such an observation is irrelevant to our discussion of bioethics and the Holocaust. In abortion, in fetal transplants, in embryo experimentation, in new methods of fertilization, in withdrawing food and water from the comatose—in all these instances, we may want to object, we are not dealing with "human beings." But we must ask whether such an objection is not touchingly naive. It assumes one favored outcome of the debate that is still underway over who or what is a human being. It will not do to employ the dubious rhetorical device of declaring that the other party must be wrong because I am right.

"There is only one step to take," the prosecutor said. In the case of the debates in which we are now embroiled, I suspect that step was in the adoption of the idea of "quality of life" as an indicator of who is and who is not to count as a human being. Then they spoke of *lebensunwertes Leben*, life that is unworthy of life. It is by no means clear to many thoughtful people how we, in principle or in practice, distinguish *lebensunwertes Leben* from a "quality of life index." But, we insist, it *should be* clear. After all, in the Holocaust they were killing actual human beings, people who were undeniably, not just potentially or marginally, *real people with real rights*. But, once again, it seems that we are found to be begging the question. It is exactly the point that they *did* deny what we take to be undeniable. Similarly, with respect to issues such as abortion, fetal experimentation, and euthanasia, many today deny what an earlier generation and, it would seem, most Americans today take to be undeniable.

That Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, Slavs, and others were not human beings in the "full meaning of the term" (*Roe v. Wade*) was the doctrine of the Third Reich. Such people were clearly not included in the community of legal rights, protections, and entitlements. Such was the law of the land; such was the view of those who were declared to be "the best and the brightest" of that society. Who was to say that they were wrong? A relatively few daring souls, such as Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said they were wrong, and paid with their lives. They said the Nazis were wrong on the basis of clear reason, civilizational tradition (remember the fences and signposts), and biblical faith.

And the rescuers studied by the Oliners said they were wrong, and acted courageously on that conviction. Some of them explained their actions in terms similar to those articulated by the Bonhoeffers. Many others, it seems, acted because that is the way they had been taught to act; they could not act differently and still be themselves. Others seem to have acted instinctively, intuitively. They had, one might say, a

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nose for evil. They were a small minority, acting outside the law and against the law, in a society that acknowledged no law other than the fiat of the State. It requires no great leap of creative imagination to see the parallels, at least with respect to their social placement and psychology, between the rescuers then and anti-abortion efforts such as Operation Rescue now.

I have written elsewhere about what I believe is accurately described as "the return of eugenics" (*Commentary*, July 1988). By that phrase I mean to include most of the controverted issues in bioethics—from fetal farming and harvesting to infanticide and assisted suicide. We tell ourselves that these issues are raised by medical and technological advances, and so we seek to reduce our sense of moral agency and responsibility. We are closer to the truth, I believe, if we acknowledge that the debates in which we are embroiled are the products of moral, cultural, and political change.

Christopher Lasch has recently and insightfully written about "the engineering of the good life" (*This World*, Summer 1989). He notes that there are no longer freak shows at carnivals and county fairs. The reason for that, we tell ourselves, is that as a society we have become more sensitive to the handicapped, or, as we are tutored to say, "the differently advantaged." Lasch suspects that this may be a convenient self-deception. The reason there are no more freak shows, he suggests, is that we have become a society that has no place for freaks.

At Nuremberg the prosecution argued that the killing programs unfolded from one another, that the genocide of the six-millionth Jew was somehow unleashed by the morphine overdose given the first harelipped child. Judgment at Nuremberg was premised upon the now frequently derided notion of the slippery slope. Those who deride and dismiss that metaphor are, I believe, rejecting the commonsensical observation that one thing is connected with another, and one thing frequently leads to another. If we give ourselves permission to do one thing, we are inescapably inviting the question about permission to do the next thing. Most current debates in bioethics have less to do with technological progress than with moral permissions. In largest part, the profession of bioethics is the Permissions Office of contemporary medical and biological science. Bioethicists are permitted to give out permission slips, with the understanding that, after due and anguished deliberation, permission will not be denied. It is the bold bioethicist who dares to say, and continues to say, No. As he or she may quickly discover, the profession leaves such sensitive souls behind as the discussion moves on to the next thing.

It is easy to be alarmist; it is easier to deny the reason for alarm. We say we know the difference between questionable human life and undeniable human life, while it is evident to all but the willfully blind that lives once thought to be undeniably human are now thrown into question. Again, the awesome step was taken with *Roe v. Wade*. In the lethal illogic of that decision, it might be suggested, we encountered our first harelipped child. The late Paul Ramsey tirelessly reminded us that we should not give ourselves a principle of permission to do what we want if the same principle permits the doing of what we abhor. A principle established by the scrupulous is no longer the exclusive property of the scrupulous. It is public and it is entrenched in practice, there to be exploited by others who view our abhorrence as no more than irrational squeamishness.

We think of the Holocaust as a rampage of irrationality, but as we tend to overlook the banality of evil so also we overlook the rationality of evil. Consider a recent and acclaimed work in this area, *Science and the Unborn* by Clifford Grobstein. Dr. Grobstein is by no means a man of evil intention. On the contrary, he is a biologist and embryologist of distinction who, we are assured by noted bioethicists, possesses exquisitely attuned ethical sensitivities. Grobstein knows that a great weakness of the prochoice argument in the abortion debate is that it downplayed or dismissed concern about what it is, or who it is, that is being terminated in abortion. The American people, he recognizes, insist that that concern not be treated lightly.

As a scientist, Grobstein acknowledges that even the zygote, and of course the embryo, is "human to the core." If abortion policy and policies that permit nontherapeutic experiments with the unborn are to be stabilized, they must be, he says, both rational and sensitive to the views of "a moral society." Religious beliefs opposed to what Dr. Grobstein proposes are deemed by him to be irrational, especially if they are Roman Catholic or fundamentalist (he tends to conflate the two). Therefore a rational policy must finally be devised and implemented by experts in national and local commissions. Their task, says Grobstein, is one of "status assignment" with respect to who is and who is not to be treated as a person with rights. Not all who are given status assignment as human beings are also given "protective status assignment." It depends on how they come out when measured by an index of "quality of life."

Those who are in charge of assigning status can also reassign status. Grobstein is primarily concerned about the treatment and uses of the unborn, but he acknowledges that his approach also has clear implications for the reassignment of the born, especially the elderly and the gravely handicapped. Nonetheless, he assures us that "in the short term" the application of the approach he advocates can be limited to the early stages of life. It is important to note that the lethal use of the embryo, for example, does not diminish its human status, according to Grobstein. On the contrary, its human dignity is

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enhanced by its sacrifice of its life for the betterment of humanity through, for example, medical experiments and fertilization procedures.

A key component in Grobstein's argument is deserving of most particular attention. He acknowledges that even the "preembryo" has "biological membership in the human community" and must be respected for its "profound potential" to become "an individual in the fullest sense, an undeniable person." Then this: Such respect is appropriate "so long as [the unborn] has a reasonable probability of continuing development to become an infant and then an adult." But note: "The situation is transformed if, for whatever reason, a particular preembryo has no reasonable prospect of developing further." And why does it have no reasonable prospect of developing further? The answer is very simple: Because we have decided to terminate it. We have not deprived it of its potential life because, by virtue of our decision, it had no potential life. In that case, Grobstein writes, the unborn "need only be assessed and valued for its then-existing properties without reference to what it might have become in a normal human life history."

The doctrine being propounded could not be more clear: With respect to human dignity and human rights, the reality is what we define it to be. There are no prior rights that are there for us to respect. Rights are created by our assignment of rights. Grobstein explicitly states that the idea of "unalienable rights" endowed by Nature and Nature's God can have no place in bioethical discussions. As philosophers might put it, the objects of abortion, medical experimentation, and other measures have no ontological status. They may have a social-political status if we choose to assign them such status. They are what we agree to say they are. And the "we" who do the agreeing are, when it comes down to it, the experts who are capable of making rational definitions untainted by the religious and other prejudices of what Grobstein calls "the frozen past."

Clifford Grobstein and his argument are in the mainstream of current bioethical debates. We know they are in the mainstream because those who define the mainstream (e.g., Daniel Callahan and Richard McCormick) say they are in the mainstream. We might have chosen for illustrative purposes any number of other books or articles. It is not accurate to say that the argument advanced by Clifford Grobstein and others is reminiscent of the Nazi doctors. In critical respects, it is a replication of the argument advanced by the Nazi doctors. Those who remember remember where they heard this kind of reasoning before. Dr. Karl Brandt and his colleagues argued this way almost fifty years ago. At Nuremberg the civilized world rejected their argument. Now it seems that we are reconsidering that rejection. The suspicion may not be entirely unwarranted that, to the degree that we are reconsidering, we are the less civilized. I emphasize that the point here is not that abortion, embryo experiments, and other practices are morally equivalent to what was done in the Holocaust. There are many and important differences, and distinctions must be made. My point is simply that some justifying arguments for such practices today are very much like the arguments employed in the Holocaust, and that is reason for deepest concern.

In addressing connections between the Holocaust and contemporary bioethical debates, I have tried to limit myself to similar habits of mind and patterns of reasoning. There are many other analogies that might have been mentioned, each of them worthy of an essay in its own right. For instance, the euphemized vocabulary of death, by which we employ language that conceals from ourselves and others what we are doing and what we are proposing to do. For another instance, the high stakes of wealth, power, and prestige that have been invested in current and developing technology and practice. And there is much else that is much like the Holocaust, but enough already.

I do not wish to end on a note suggesting despair. We should not grant Hitler a posthumous victory by succumbing to doctrines of historical or technological inevitability. Then is not now, and there is not here, and they are not us. The banality of evil speaks of the everydayness of evil, of decisions made day by day, on days no doubt much like this day. And remembering the banality of evil can remind us also of the banality of virtue. Virtue, as Aristotle tells us, is a matter of habits, and, as Dr. Johnson tells us, a matter of remembering. Our time is not so new as we sometimes like to think. Demystified of the techniques and the professional jargon, the hard questions facing us today are, at their heart, the questions faced by the prophets of old. Who is my neighbor? To whom am I neighbor? Recognizing this truth does not give us the answer to all our bioethical disputes, but it does keep before us the questions that we are answering.

The broken fences around the law can be repaired, and new fences can be erected. The safety rail surrounding the abyss can be strengthened. The signposts of Hippocrates and Nuremberg can be retrieved and refurbished. These things can be done; we cannot know whether they will be done. I confess that I draw encouragement from the way in which, in the last seventeen years, a democratic people, opposing almost every establishment of the society, has refused to acquiesce in the lethal illogic of *Roe v. Wade*. But there is still a very long way to go. Every step we take is shadowed by the Holocaust. The way they were is, in important respects, ominously like the way we are. But that past need not be our future. The very fact that there is a public discussion about contemporary bioethics and the Holocaust may be taken as a sign of determination that that not be our future.

Never again? We simply do not know. We do not need to know. Eliot had it right: "For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business." FT

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The Return of the Catholic Whig

Michael Novak

In his famous Postscript to *The Constitution of Liberty,* Friedrich von Hayek identified Thomas Aquinas as "the first Whig," and has several times since noted how important it is to distinguish the Whig tradition from that of many exponents of the classical liberal tradition. Among Hayek's favorite exemplars of the Whig tradition are Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord Acton. It is noteworthy that all three of Hayek's models are Catholic, and to his list other names can readily be added: Jacques Maritain, Yves R. Simon, and John Courtney Murray.

In important ways, all these thinkers go beyond the usual positions of "liberals." For example, they have a respect for language, law, liturgy, and tradition that, in some senses, marks them as "conservative." Still, they believe in some human progress, and they emphasize human capacities for reflection on alternatives and choice among them—characteristics that mark them as realistic progressives. With the liberals, they locate human dignity in liberty, but *ordered* liberty (just as, for Aquinas, practical wisdom is *recta* ratio). The Catholic Whigs, then, present a distinctive mix: conservative, progressive, liberal, and realistic.

One of the best ways of seeing the richness of the Catholic Whig point of view is to examine its concept of community—or, rather, its co-definition of community and person. The present purpose is to present thereof a brief exposition.

In the Catholic Whig tradition, a true community respects free persons; an inadequate or false community does not. Correlatively, a fully developed person is capable of knowing and loving; but these are exactly the two human capacities that are inherently communitarian. Note again the co-definition: To be a free person is to know and to love others in community. A community is true when, in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, its institutions and practices enable persons to multiply the frequency of their acts of knowing and loving. False community represses capacities for reflection and choice. True community enlarges them. These are the lessons that guided the new human experiment in the Americas, in the city aptly named for the love of brothers, Philadelphia.

Michael Novak *is the George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute. He is a member of the editorial board of* First Things.

I

The primal experience of the two continents of the Americas has been the struggle to build new communities. When the first pilgrims departed from Leyden, Holland, to set sail across the great Atlantic for what they would call New England, they knew what they would *not* find waiting for them. They would not find warm inns with cheerful fires in fireplaces already built. They would not find fields ripe with grain, already protected by soundly built fences. On the contrary, they were pursuing an errand into a wilderness. The work of building up cities and homes loomed before them as a formidable task. Nearly everything they were to have they would have to create themselves. Climate and environment might well be more hostile than they could withstand; certainly no one person alone could survive. The future depended on their ability to build communities, and to build them in such fashion as would take root and eventually prosper.

While they were very conscious, indeed, of building a *new* world, and even then were beginning to imagine a *new order,* our ancestors were far from being indifferent to tradition. They brought books, ideas, artifacts, tools, and goods that they could not at first hope to provide for themselves. Even on shipboard, their faces were turned toward the immense tasks of building cities, churches, civic buildings, markets, and even facilities for carpenters, metalworkers, brickmakers, ironworkers, glassblowers, and for all the other crafts and trades indispensable for the fairly high levels

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of common life to which they had been accustomed.

Our ancestors also brought with them a complex heritage of ideas. Some historians of the American experience emphasize the radical break between the ancient, classic tradition of the "liberal" arts and the modern liberal tradition. The first springs from Plato and Aristotle, the second from Hobbes. The first roots itself in natural law, the second in natural rights. The first holds that humans are by nature social animals; the second holds that in "the state of nature" human is to human as wolf to wolf. By its harshness, the second injected perhaps sufficient realism and an ardent desire for checks and balances, so as to make a new experiment more likely of success. The first grounded better, perhaps, the hope of genuine human progress and success, as proper to the social constitution of the human heart and mind.

Nevertheless, the conflict between these two visions—that of the ancients and that of the moderns—should not be exaggerated. The formal light under which the ancients looked at nature was different from the formal light under which, e.g., Hobbes looked at the "state of nature." The ancients noted the ideal form of human nature, the human capacity for knowing and loving. These capacities are inherently social. Therefore, for the ancients, humans are (in their capacities, even if not always in their actual practice) social animals. Not all the ancients were idealists, however. There have not been many shrewder realists than Aristotle, who said that in politics we must be satisfied to see "some tincture of virtue."

And this, precisely, was Hobbes' starting place. He argued that, apart from civilization, humans showed barely a tincture of virtue. In the pre-civilized state, "nature" displays a barbaric "war of all against all." The formal light through which Hobbes inspects experience is not historical. He does not mean that once upon a time there was a Garden of Evil ("the state of nature"), the experience of which taught humans at a specific date to value civilization. Rather, his formal light was conceptual, and consisted in stressing the anti-social capacities of those human beings who lack all civilizing virtues. Hobbes thought that in our common life we are never very far from the state of nature, and indeed the experiences of our century have taught us to respect a certain Hobbesian pessimism.

Still, it is much more difficult than Hobbes thinks for humans to be purely evil in all respects. If the horrors of the modern age suggest that human evil is perhaps even more awful in its reach than he imagined, it is also the case that there is a broadly shared human revulsion against such evil. It is not "unnatural" for humans to be moved by the torture, pain, and death of others far away. Thus today, the human rights revolution is slowly affecting nearly all of humankind. In any case, the very scholars who insist upon the sharp divide between the world of Aristotle and the world of Hobbes prize mightily "the better angels of our nature" represented by higher standards of human rights performance.

It is precisely here that the Catholic Whig tradition has a crucial philosophical role to play in bridging the best of the ancient tradition with the best of the modern tradition. In a general way—to state my thesis baldly—the modern "liberal" tradition excelled in devising practical institutional protections for human rights. By contrast, the Great Tradition of the *philosophia perennis* excelled in casting a more accurate light upon those basic philosophical conceptions that undergird liberal institutions. Put another way, the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, and others among the moderns are less than adequate *as philosophies*. Meanwhile, the philosophies of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and others are less than adequate *with regard to the practical institutions* that would incarnate their conceptions in social structures. The present task of the Catholic Whig tradition is to form a new synthesis of philosophical conceptions and practical institutions that do justice, together, to "private rights" and "public happiness." This synthesis must join together the full actualization of both the human person and the human community.

II

It is obvious that the key conceptions here are "person" and "community." Here the Catholic intellectual tradition, in particular, is able to offer special light. As the German historian of philosophy Wilhelm Windelbrand has pointed out, the concept of "person" is richer than the concept of "individual," and arose historically from the efforts of Catholic theologians to do justice to the theological statement that Jesus Christ is human in nature but divine in person. Beyond Jesus' human individuality, theologians had to tangle with the concept of his personhood. Therefore, they thought long and hard about the difference between the two concepts, the individual and the person. It is the latter that adequately grounds the dignity and the rights of every man and woman.

The human person, precisely *qua* person, is a foundational source of insight and love: autonomous, autarkic, a hypostatic whole, inviolable, inalienable, an end and not only a means. The human person is called directly to union with the One in whose image each has been created. The person, therefore, can never be treated, even by the community, as a means rather than as an end. The very purpose of a true community is to nourish in its midst the full development of each and every person who is among its members. Conversely, it is in the nature of the human person—an originating source of knowing and of loving—to be in communion with others, who share in his or her knowing and loving. Knowing and loving are inherently acts of communion.

Thus the classical view, brought in Aquinas to a fullness that was less developed in Aristotle, holds

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simultaneously that, in one sense, the inherent end of personhood is communion and, in a reciprocal sense, that the inherent end of a true community is full respect for the personhood of each of its members. A human community, therefore, is *sui generis*. It is not like a hive, or a herd, or a mere collective. Each of its members is not *merely* a member, a part of the whole. On the contrary, each is a whole, wholly worthy of respect in herself or himself. Each must be treated as an end, not solely as a means. Each has an autonomous life of his or her own, worthy of infinite respect as a participant in God's own originating power of knowing and of loving. Each is an agent of reflection and choice. Unless he or she is injuring others, the only way in which a genuine community can approach a rational person is by way of knowing and of loving; that is to say, through rational and civil persuasion, not through coercion, force, or systematic oppression.

Just the same, the classic Catholic tradition, even while working out wonderfully balanced accounts of person and community, tended to tip the balance toward community. Why is this? Perhaps it was because the social, familial, political, and economic institutions that would in later times enlarge the scope of liberty open to the human person remained for many long centuries unknown. Perhaps it was because existing communities were small and their survival was often threatened. (This fact is still visible to us in the thick battlements by which the walled cities of ancient and medieval Europe vainly tried to repel generations of hostile invaders.)

In any case, at least sixty times in his many works St. Thomas Aquinas articulates one variant or another of a classic dictum that goes back as far as Aristotle: "The good of the many is more godlike than the good of the individual." The example that made this observation cogent to the Great Tradition is the willingness of individuals to die to defend the common good of the city. It is easy to see why the sacrifice of self for the community seemed godlike. But there is also a danger in this formulation. It may suggest to the unwary that the individual is but a means to the survival of the community. Only in extraordinary circumstances, and for a full set of sound reasons, can a community justly ask so much of its citizens. Otherwise, it is wrong to imagine that the individual is always expendable if only the social whole chooses that expedient. Aquinas did not himself accept this dangerously broad implication. He could not, because of his concept of the human person.

Civilization, Thomas Aquinas liked to say, is constituted by reasoned discourse. The difference between barbarism and civilization consists in this: barbaric regimes coerce their citizens, civilized regimes approach citizens through their own autonomous capacities for full consent. Persons are treated as persons only when approached through knowing and loving. For free persons, the legitimacy of government lies in the consent of the governed.

The "consent of the governed" is a political principle, clearly articulated in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776. This principle flows from the reality of the human person, an autonomous creature whose essential nature consists in a capacity for reflection and choice. The only appropriate approach to such agents is through reasoned consent. That truth, declared to be self-evident in 1776, was not at that time in fact self-evident to all human beings. But historical experience worldwide, under tyranny and torture, has made that truth increasingly self-evident in our era. All the world recognizes today that any approach through tyranny, torture, or coercion—any attempt to treat human beings as part of a mere collective, as ants in an anthill, bees in a hive, sheep in a herd, or animals on an "animal farm"—distorts and oppresses the true capacities of human persons. Any such regime is bound to be as oppressive, uncreative, and unproductive as it is illegitimate. From many sad experiences, the world has learned that the source of human creativity is the human capacity for reflective choice.

It is therefore a mark of modern thought that it offers sharper and more sustained attention to the nature and the rights of the human person than did ancient thought. Where ancient and medieval societies tipped the balance toward the common good, modern societies have placed compensating weights—and sometimes more than compensating weights—on the side of the person. Modern institutions make this new emphasis practical, concrete, and consequential.

But where should one draw the line? How should one strike a balance? This debate is more than academic. Push too far in the direction of solidarity, and the outcome is the totalitarian collective. Push too far in the direction of the individual, and the outcome is egotism, moral relativism (subjectivism), and a war of all against all. Even among thinkers determined to avoid both extremes, how exactly to do due justice both to person and to community is not easily discernible—not in daily family life, not in the institutions of religion, not in political action, and not in the business corporation. Thinkers of a moderate bent wish to honor both the person and the community, both the needs of individuals and the needs of social harmony. But how, where, and in what degree?

My aim here is not to answer that question in the abstract. Instead, I take a hint from Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville suggests that the terms of the ancient debate between the person and the community (between *personalism* and *solidarism*, as certain Europeans put it in the 1930s) have been changed by the American experience. The New World is different from the Old World. What we mean by "person" is different here, as well as what we mean by "community." And the *Novus Ordo* has accordingly suggested a fresh historical solution to an ancient conundrum.

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III

Alexis de Tocqueville was not only an astute observer; he was also a social scientist of the first rank. And he formulated from what he observed among those he took to be the first people to embody the "new order of the ages" the first "law" of the "new science of politics." His purpose was to alert Europe to a new tide in human history, a tide deep and wide and directed by Providence, that would soon, or eventually, sweep the whole world. He meant the tide of a new kind of democracy, a democratic republic with an effective respect for the singular human person. A new kind of political-economic-moral order was rising—under the hand of Providence, he thought—and perhaps the most striking thing about this new order was that in it "men have in our time carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the object of common desires, and have applied this new technique to the greatest number of purposes." Here Tocqueville called attention to a new reality, one which can fairly be described neither as individualistic nor, quite, as constituting a full community. This new reality is a new form of social life: the voluntary association.

In America, Tocqueville observed, when citizens discerned new needs or purposes, they voluntarily formed committees or other informal organizations to meet them. What in France citizens turned to the state to do for them, Tocqueville exclaimed, and what in Great Britain they turned to the aristocracy to do, in America they formed their own associations to accomplish. Thus they built great universities, museums, and art galleries; sent missionaries to the Antipodes; raised funds for the disabled; put up public monuments; fed and clothed victims of natural disasters, and the like. This new form of social life—never total enough to constitute a fully defined community, but far beyond the power of individuals alone—called for a new "knowledge of association."

This new "knowledge of association," Tocqueville explains,

> is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others.... Among laws controlling human societies there is one more precise and clearer, it seems to me, than all the others. If men are to remain civilized or to become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of conditions spreads.

Why association? Because inherent in respect for the human person is respect for the reflectively chosen forms of association that persons create in order to pursue their common interests. In order to constitute a people out of mere masses or mere mobs, such freely, rationally chosen associations are indispensable.

In an important sense (not only an historical sense, as actually happened in the United States), such freely chosen associations are prior to the state. They are prior philosophically and practically. Philosophically, because they ground the social nature of the human person in reflective and voluntary social life, duly proportioned to the human need of proximity, voice, and active participation. Practically, because human beings need immediate participation in the forming of social consent and they also need social protection, lest in their solitary individual selves they stand naked before the power of an omnipotent state.

In short, "mediating associations" or "mediating institutions," as these voluntarily formed local structures are technically called, are crucial forms of human sociality, and they are prior to the formation of a national society. They are defenses against the state. They are also natural expressions of concrete, fleshly human sociality. Before humans are citizens of states, they are active participants in society.

As Jacques Maritain has stressed, "society" is a far larger and more vital reality than "state." Only a densely active society with many vital civic associations is sufficiently defended against the state, whose tendencies have historically been tyrannous. Only a society with many vital associations fully expresses the social nature of the person. The new science of association, therefore, meets two basic needs of human nature, one positive, one negative. The social nature of humans gives rise to associations not only because individuals need protection from abuse, but also because they have a positive need for participation and self-expression. In addition, in a way entirely appropriate to the human person, associations come into being through personal consent.

Tocqueville is surely correct: the principle of association is, in fact, the first law of democracy. Without vital mediating institutions, intermediate between the lone individual and the state, democracy has no muscular social fiber; it is a void within which a mere mob is blown about by demagoguery. The strength of a people, as distinguished from a mob, lies in its capacity for voluntarily forming multiple associations of self-government and social purpose on its own. The social life of a people is rich, complex, and strong even before the question of a national state arises.

Even President Gorbachev in the USSR appears to have grasped this. To make Soviet society creative, he must free Soviet persons (at least a little) through *glasnost*, allowing creative and reflective intellect to flourish. In order to derive legitimacy and creative cooperation from all the people, he must reshape Soviet institutions through *perestroika*. In order to break through the stranglehold of Communist Party members over every sclerotic institution of Soviet life, he must go as far as he dares to empower the creativity of individual citizens. The source of dynamic power in any human community, in short, is the creativity

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locked within the capacities of individual human persons for insight and choice.

It is sometimes charged that the Anglo-American liberal tradition is excessive in its emphasis upon the individual and deficient in its philosophy of community. That charge is not quite accurate; still, for the sake of argument, let me accept its burden. Suppose that it is true that the *philosophy* of the liberal society is inferior to, say, Catholic social thought on these two points. From that it does not follow that the *institutional praxis* of the liberal society is inferior to the institutional praxis of existing Catholic social orders. It is at least conceivable that liberal societies such as West Germany, Great Britain, France, and the United States pay a more just respect to the rights of persons on the one hand and, on the other hand, to the building up of intermediate social bodies through reflection and choice than do some existing Catholic countries. Explicit philosophy and institutional practice do not always coincide. Indeed, practice may often be better than philosophy. This was the judgment of Jacques Maritain in his *Reflections on America*: American practices are better, deeper, and richer, he concluded, than American ideology.

Let me further propose the Novak rule of philosophical interpretation. Philosophers (and theologians) often stress in their writings exactly what their cultures lack, and are silent about solid habits readily taken for granted. Thus in Great Britain, where social conformity has long been in fashion, where individuals are supremely sensitive to others around them and have a sort of social conscience internalized within their hearts, philosophers speak incessantly about the individual. By contrast, in Italy philosophers speak incessantly about *communita*—while practicing an almost medieval and princely self-assertion and exhibiting a fiercely proud individualism that borders on anarchy. Compare in those two countries the social practice of boarding a bus. In London, citizens patiently and respectfully queue up in orderly fashion. In Rome, boarding a bus is one of the world's wildest adventures in laissez-faire as well as one of its most sensuous experiences. In London, where philosophers praise individualism, individuals defer to others; in Rome, where philosophers praise community, it's every man for himself. The Novak rule anticipates this turn.

IV

In sum, those who in the long run trust realism and the lessons of vivid human experience—and who hold to first principles such as the "self-evident truth" that human persons are appropriately respected solely when their native capacities for reflection and choice are permitted free play—seem to have been vindicated by human history. "The God who gave us life gave us liberty," Thomas Jefferson exclaimed, the same point he made in the text of the Declaration of Independence when declaiming on men's equal and inalienable rights. None of the rights he had in mind are American rights; they are human rights. They inhere in persons—they are the properties proper to human persons—because they were conferred on each directly by the Creator, who made all human persons in His image. Catholic thought adds further that as the proper life of God is insight and love, so also is the life proper to human persons. As God is a person, so are humans.

It is the distinctive achievement of the modern Catholic Whig tradition to have added to the classical perception of the primacy (in certain respects) of the community the modern perception of the primacy (in other respects) of the person. This achievement permits an unparalleled degree of societal concern for the rights, liberties, and dignity of human persons, *qua* persons (i.e., *not* because of their opinions, beliefs, religion, ethnicity, or race). But it also nourishes the achievement of a vastly larger number of voluntary associations, a higher degree of voluntary social cooperation, a broader base of love and gratitude for the commonwealth, and a more explicitly consensual national community than was known in ancient or medieval times.

It is more than a theoretical possibility that we can create new social systems—or reconstitute old ones—so that historically unparalleled respect is shown both for individual persons and for the common good. Some three dozen societies on this planet (none of them, of course, saintly or likely to be mistaken for the Kingdom of God) have actually shown such respect, in their institutions and in their daily practice. Though far from perfection, and with each manifesting much to be done before liberty and justice for all are fully served, such societies afford protections for basic rights more broadly and efficaciously than was ever accomplished in any traditional, pre-modern, pre-capitalist, or pre-republican society.

To my way of thinking, the Whig tradition—and particularly the Catholic Whig tradition—offers the world's best statement of philosophical principles and practical guidelines concerning how and why free citizens should shape new societies worthy of their human rights and ordered liberties. Such societies, to secure these rights, must give primacy to community. But to build true and authentic communities, these societies must give primacy to persons. Both forms of primacy are important. Each is necessary for the other's definition—and for the other's flourishing.

To secure the rights of the person, give primacy to community. To build a genuinely human community, give primacy to the person. Such is the Catholic Whig tradition, tutored by the experience of the Americas and shocked by the terrors of the twentieth century. And such, now, is most of the world's agenda. FT

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Christians and Economic Development

Amy L. Sherman

The 1980s may well be looked back upon as a decade of intellectual reformation in the so-called North-South debate. A burst of revisionist thinking has affected recent discussions of Third World economic development and may offer a harbinger of better policies vis-a-vis the world's poor. There are signs of an emerging consensus that the development approach followed until very recently—one that emphasized large wealth transfers from the developed to the underdeveloped world, worried about the "population explosion" draining natural resources, and questioned capitalism's ability to "trickle down" prosperity to the masses—has not brought sustained and stable growth to the Third World. Revisionists have questioned Club of Rome pessimism about the prospects for world development and recaptured the enthusiasm for market development strategies that characterized post-World War II U.S. foreign aid policy.

One example of renewed appreciation for market-oriented approaches is Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. *Sollicitudo*, written on the twentieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, rejects that document's predominantly statist model for development and endorses both the democracy-development connection and the crucial role of individual initiative in economic advancement. A more surprising example is prominent liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez's tentative rethinking about democracy, development, and socialism. Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times* reported not long ago that Gutierrez is willing—even if only "very theoretically"—to entertain the idea that "if evidence showed capitalism effectively relieving poverty, there could be a capitalist liberation theology."

Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* tacitly admits serious doubts about the efficacy of centralized economic planning, which, as Nicholas Eberstadt's latest work *The Poverty of Communism* (1988) demonstrates, has failed to provide freedom (which few expected) or bread (which many hoped for). Economic performance in terms of health and nutrition has been so shoddy that in some communist-bloc countries, life expectancy is actually declining.

Perhaps the most significant rethinking in the development community has been done by sociologist Peter Berger. In an article in *Commentary* ("Underdevelopment Revisited," July 1984), Berger reconsidered the conclusions of his remarkable *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, published ten years earlier. *Pyramids* had evaluated the prevailing models of economic development, examining Brazil as a test-case of capitalism, and Mao's China as an experiment in socialism. Throughout the book, Berger struck an evenhanded posture, arguing that both systems had "generated myths that had to be debunked," and advocating an "open, non-doctrinaire approach" to development. "What came through," he reflected in 1984, "was some vague notion of a 'third way.'...I had no clear conception of what this might look like...." With ten years of hindsight, Berger articulated his new position on development: "Not to put too fine a point on it, I am much less evenhanded today in my assessment of capitalist and socialist development models: I have become much more emphatically pro-capitalist." His *The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality & Liberty* sets forth the reasons why.

Amy L. Sherman *is a graduate student at the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia.*

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The most important reason is that not one case of successful socialist development can be found in the Third World. Socialism has proved unable to produce material prosperity and has failed even to live up to its pledge to distribute resources equitably. Rather, as Berger puts it, what has occurred with "disturbing regularity" in new socialist regimes is the establishment of an inefficient Soviet-style *nomenklatura*. At the same time, the "success stories" of Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea have demonstrated the economic superiority of market-oriented models of development. The experience of these so-called "Four Little Dragons" indicates that an exuberant embrace of capitalism doesn't have to mean brutish consequences for the poor—indeed, the benefits of economic growth have "lifted the poor from grinding poverty and wiped out Third World misery."

The Capitalist Revolution's evaluation of capitalism follows the criteria of success Berger proposed in *Pyramids of Sacrifice;* namely, that the benefits of development must reach the poorest members of society and that development ought not to require the abrogation of human rights or the demeaning of cherished cultural values. For Berger, the evidence suggests that if one truly wants to adopt a "preferential option for the poor," one should exercise a preferential option for capitalist models of development.

II

Christian participation in debates over development policy follows from the concern for the poor that is central to the Gospel message. That concern, if it is to be effective, needs to be informed, and it is unfortunate that key sectors of the Christian community have failed to keep up with empirical developments in the field. Protestant oldline (a term empirically more accurate than the former "mainline") churches in particular have remained unaware of or stubbornly resistant to the wealth of new data on development that has emerged in recent years.

The oldline, in deliberations on economic development, is at best stuck in *Pyramids of Sacrifice*'s nebulous "third way"; at worst, it advocates discredited statist (socialist) models of development. That it has failed to "catch up" with the economic realities of the eighties is readily apparent from analysis of four recent church pronouncements on economic development: the United Church of Christ's (UCC) 1987 study paper, *Christian Faith and Economic Life*; the United Methodists' 1988 "Resolution on Economic Justice"; the Episcopal Urban Bishops Coalition's 1987 study guide, *Economic Justice and Christian Conscience*; and the 1984 Presbyterian Church (USA) statement, *Christian Faith and Economic Justice.*

Oldline church activists base their conclusions about development economics to a considerable degree on their understanding of biblical theology regarding poverty. They seek to identify themes and biblical principles that, coupled with prudential judgments about the world economy, provide a conception of "economic justice." All four documents argue that any "just" economic system will reflect, at minimum, the following biblical principles.

1) *Special concern for the basic human needs of the poor.* According to the oldline, God wills that all people have access to the basic necessities of life. The Methodists' 1988 "Resolution on Economic Justice" notes that "law codes in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy show a special concern for the resources necessary to meet human needs and guarantee basic rights such as food, clothing, just business dealings, and access to the juridical process." God's love for the poor is also expressed, the oldline claims, in Old Testament regulations promulgated to prevent gross economic disparities among the Israelites. The New Testament continues these themes. The 1987 UCC study paper reminds readers that Jesus came to "preach good news to the poor" and to "set at liberty those who are oppressed." It argues that the Parable of the Great Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46), in which the righteous are defined as those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and ministered to the poor, "discloses God's fundamental relationship with and intentions for humanity."

2) *Stewardship.* This theme has two implications for oldline economics. First, it teaches that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." For the Presbyterians, this implies that "human domination over material things is limited." For the United Church of Christ, it means that private property rights are similarly limited: "as the stewards of God's creation, humanity's access to resources, including ownership of private property is conditional.... [A] recognition of the right of private property does not mean that anyone has the right to unlimited accumulation of wealth." The Episcopal Bishops concur: "private ownership of property, in the biblical view, is never ultimate."

Second, stewardship means taking care of God's earth. Environmentally insensitive economic practices are immoral. The UCC argues that humans have already wreaked havoc on God's earth; we have "violated our role as stewards" by failing to "live in harmony with nature." Faithful stewards would follow development strategies that protect the earth, even if by doing so they sustained economic losses. The UCC contends that "as stewards of the earth, we must recognize the fragility of the ecosystems which sustain all of creation. This will require us to identify and enforce limits on economic growth."

3) *Recognition and avoidance of structural sin.* Drawing on the Old Testament prophets, oldline analysts insist that sin must be recognized as both individual and corporate. The prophetic message, they argue, should be understood primarily as an economic one, condemning *structural injustice* in Israel. The economic, social, and legal arrangements of the society were "sinful" because they were based on greed,

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exploitation, and indifference to the poor. They produced gross disparities in wealth, and economic systems that do the same today also stand under prophetic judgment.

These principles taken together lead the oldline to define a just economic system primarily in terms of its ability to ensure an equitable distribution of resources that guarantees the fulfillment of basic needs. At that level of generalization, few would disagree. Problems develop, however, as the discussion gets more specific.

III

Having defined the kind of economic system it wishes to attain, the oldline analyzes the present global economic order to identify obstacles to the achievement of a just world economy and to offer guidelines for its establishment. Four key themes emerge from their deliberations: a "limits to growth" mentality, agreement with dependency theory, sympathy toward the "basic human needs" strategy for development, and confidence in government-led programs of redistribution.

Essentially, *limits to growth* philosophy holds that the world is in the grips of a severe economic crisis; that reckless use of resources has led to critical ecological damage; that the world is rapidly running out of resources and radically new ways must be found to reverse the ominous trend; and that traditional emphasis on economic *growth* (as opposed to more equitable distribution) is no longer appropriate or feasible. This philosophy was publicly advanced in the Club of Rome reports during the 1970s that have since been brought into serious question by the new thinkers in development. Reflecting the old view, the Presbyterians suggest ominously that "warnings of a severe and multidimensional crisis abound." The economic pie is no longer growing: resources are being depleted and growth cannot be pursued in the reckless, environmentally insensitive way it has been in the past. "The world's present resources are dwindling... and at some point they will all be gone. Oil, water, valuable minerals and even arable land itself, are all limited." The UCC argues for an "ecologically sustainable" system in which the rate of population growth and pollution are "within the capacity of the earth to support." The upshot of all this is a renewed emphasis on redistribution. If there is only so much to go around, and the present distributional patterns are leaving so many without basic material resources, then radical new ways of distributing wealth must be adopted.

The fundamental assertion of *dependency theory* is that the international economic system is structured in a "core-periphery" relationship, the "core" being the rich, industrialized "North," and the "periphery" being the poor, underdeveloped "South." The periphery is said to be "dependent" upon or dominated by the "neo-colonialist" economies of the core states. This arrangement has presumably had various adverse consequences for the South, most notably the "immiseration" of the population. In dependency theorist André Gunder Frank's words, the relationship leads, necessarily, to the "development of underdevelopment"; in other words, the poverty of the periphery is brought about by its relationship with the core. As the relationship continues, the gap separating rich and poor grows. In short, poor nations entering the international system are made worse off by so doing.

Oldline statements reveal a deep indebtedness to dependency analysis. All four agree that the "gap" *between the rich and the poor is widening.* All four believe that the international order is characterized by gross and unjustified disparities in income. All four worry about the negative influence of multinational corporations on the Third World's poor. The UCC notes that "in its extreme form dependency theory asserts that in order for the rich to remain rich, the poor countries must stay poor." It goes on to state both that "many thoughtful Third World Christians subscribe to dependency theory" and that "some of the claims of dependency theorists can be substantiated."

The oldline looks favorably upon dependency theory's call for a "new international economic order" (NIEO) in which resources will be distributed more evenly among nations—even if this requires involuntary resource transfers executed by powerful new international economic institutions. The UCC's enthusiasm for NIEO spills over into a suggestion that a "progressive global tax of between one and five percent of GNP be levied on all countries with per capita incomes of over $2,000 per year." The tax revenues would then be redistributed to "the two-thirds of the human family who live in the low-income and middle-income economies"—presumably by national and multinational agencies.

The oldline favors the so-called *"basic human needs"* approach to development that focuses on providing health services, schools, housing, and food to the poor. In this model, development aid is judged by its ability to relieve the material suffering of the poor, as against the "cold" standards by which the other prominent development strategy, industrialization, is measured: real GNP per capita growth, increases in investments, balance of trade, etc. The UCC statement is forthright in its preference for models of development which "focus more on meeting key national or basic human needs and which promote a more equitable income distribution within Third World countries."

The Methodist statement holds that "covenant people are committed to equitable distribution of resources to meet basic human needs and to social systems that provide ongoing access to those resources." For the Presbyterians, income disparities between the North and the South mean that the "the

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world is characterized by grave economic injustice" and needs to be brought into line with biblical teaching, i.e., *redistribution*. The oldline insists that redistribution is the only practical and "biblical" solution to poverty. Its intense attachment to redistribution leads it to favor an expansion of government's sphere of authority. The Episcopalians submit that "government at all levels must be challenged once again to play a responsible role in correcting the inequities in the economic crisis." In a section entitled "The Limits of Friendly Persuasion," the Episcopal Bishops wonder whether "we are willing to mobilize ourselves" for the radical reform measures necessary to carry out redistribution. And if such will cannot be summoned, the bishops confess that they "do not know" whether alternatives to "revolution" can be found.

IV

The oldline's program of theological economics yields its conception of itself as being in "solidarity with the poor." But slogans should not substitute for analysis, and careful examination of the oldline philosophy reveals that it relies on insufficient biblical analysis and clings stubbornly to dubious economic propositions. That being the case, one wonders about the actual value to the poor of the oldline's "solidarity" with it.

The oldline's theology of economic development would be much improved, to begin with, by more serious reflection on the doctrine of creation. One obvious lesson of creation is that man is created in God's image, meaning, man is a creator. Since He creates, we should as well, and this includes the *creation of wealth*. God's commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" may well have significant implications beyond procreation; it may be interpreted as a general encouragement to productive labor. The oldline's discomfiture at economic inequalities leads it to suggest a moral necessity for an equality of outcomes, and thus to emphasize not production but distribution. The Presbyterians, for example, accept John Rawls' formula for distributional justice: distribution of all social resources should be equal, unless an unequal distribution benefits the disadvantaged of society. But as Michael Novak has commented, "the Jewish and Christian view shows that God is not committed to equality of results. One steward differs from another in his performance; some virgins are foolish, some wise."

The oldline statements also fail to draw important distinctions as to *who* is responsible for carrying out God's commandments with regard to the poor. Doug Bandow's recent book, *Beyond Good Intentions* (1988), helps demarcate the lines of responsibility, noting biblical instruction on the proper roles of individuals, family, and church. The responsibilities of civil government in executing charitable duties are less certain. But the oldline statements indiscriminately apply biblical injunctions to care for the needy to believers and nonbelievers, to the Church and the civil government. In addition, they seriously alter the biblical message when they pass from admonitions to give *voluntarily* to policies which *compel* redistribution. The Episcopal and Presbyterian statements, for example, call for more government taxation, redistribution, and expanded provision for material needs. This indiscriminate application of biblical injunctions clouds the Church's understanding of the right role of government, and tends to increase government's sphere of influence. In effect, these churches encourage the state to enforce upon nonbelievers the standards of charitable conduct to which believers aspire. Moreover, they encourage economic policies whose actual results in helping the poor are ambiguous at best.

In addition, the oldline's conception of solidarity with the poor suffers from excessively economic interpretations of certain biblical passages. For example, the oldline's interpretation of stewardship emphasizes only the *distributional* aspects of the doctrine (i.e., personal accumulation of wealth at the expense of others is bad stewardship) and disregards equally important *productivity* issues encompassed in the notion. As the Parable of the Talents suggests, good stewards are also good investors, creatively using God-given resources to produce new wealth. Moreover, the oldline's economic interpretation of the prophetic message misses the larger point: the prophets' *primary* lament is that Israel has departed from its God. Economic injustice is but one result of this disobedience. The prophets' call is not for an overhaul of "sinful structures" as much as it is for spiritual repentance and the conversion to God-centered attitudes that will allow needed socio-economic reforms to take place. The prophets' agenda starts with transformation of individuals and leads to transformation of society, not the reverse.

While the oldline's theology reminds Christians of the importance of being involved in ministry to the poor, it does not provide sufficient guidelines for relating faith to economic questions. Although the oldline statements appear to begin with the biblical text and end with policy pronouncements, the economic philosophy advanced seems to have been predetermined.

In any case, that economic philosophy does not bode well for the poor. In recent years, writers such as Julian Simon, P. T. Bauer, Michael Novak, and Ronald Nash have effectively debunked both the "limits to growth" mentality and dependency theory. As with ideas, so with practice: three decades of underdeveloped countries following the types of economic policies advocated by the oldline have resulted in anything but a liberation of the poor. The 1987 "Index of Human Suffering" report of the Population Crisis Committee

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rated nations on a scale of human misery using various data including GNP per capita, inflation rate, infant mortality, access to clean water, literacy, and general personal freedoms. The eleven countries with the *worst* ratings have followed internal economic policies that closely resemble the measures advocated by the oldline.

The oldline's conception of solidarity with the poor, fortunately, is not the only Christian development philosophy available. Five evangelical relief and development agencies—Food for the Hungry, Transformation International, World Concern, World Relief, and World Vision—are already performing relief and development tasks. These evangelicals can lead the way to a reformation in Third World development strategy because they have for the most part avoided the errors of their oldline co-activists and have shown more sensitivity to the forceful empirical analysis of the 1980s.

V

These five organizations do not represent the full spectrum of evangelical engagement with questions of poverty and development. Rather they reflect only a small part of "evangelicaldom," that complex social movement that includes hundreds of denominations and independent churches; publications such as *Christianity Today, Sojourners, Moody Monthly,* and *World*; evangelical colleges and seminaries; evangelistic and discipleship groups such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Navigators; Christian television and radio networks, stations, and programs; the National Association of Evangelicals and a host of other Wheaton-based Christian ministries; and activist groups such as Evangelicals for Social Action.

Many evangelical scholars, publicists, and activists participate in the development debate. At times their involvement largely echoes the perspectives of their new-class peers in the oldline church, and to the extent that evangelicals buy into the oldline's conception of solidarity with the poor, their contribution to the reformation of development policy will be limited. (One sees signs of this on the evangelical left.) But there is reason to hope that they can resist that temptation.

The five agencies considered here carry out similar programs. All except Transformation International are involved in emergency relief efforts and in traditional community development projects: digging wells, building health clinics, constructing irrigation systems. All are involved as well in vocational training, technical assistance programs, and micro-economic development. Some are active in "development education," seeking to inform American Christians about the problems of hunger and underdevelopment; proportionally, though, only a small share of their budget is earmarked for this. The agencies also employ similar development methods. Wherever and whenever possible, they work through local churches—believing this provides greater financial accountability and more opportunity for spiritual witness—and invite the active participation of local people in development projects.

One notable feature of evangelical involvement in economic development is its relative lack of visibility. Due in part to the oldline's liberationist rhetoric and in part to the relatively unpublicized activities of evangelical relief and development agencies, many people believe that oldline churches are far more active in efforts to alleviate poverty than are evangelicals. Evangelicals, so it is thought, are much more interested in the "vertical" side of ministry, bringing people to faith in God, than in the "horizontal" aspect, caring for the neighbor. In fact, in terms of financial commitment to development, it appears that evangelicals are doing more on the ground to help the poor than their oldline counterparts. Although differences in methods of financial reporting among church agencies make the comparisons difficult, the available evidence indicates that the evangelicals are spending more than twice as much as oldline agencies on Third World relief and development ministries.

The evangelicals' theology of development coincides with the oldline's in its concern for the poorest of the poor. Each agency is committed to helping the most vulnerable members of poor societies: widows, children, orphans, and the disabled. But several significant differences distinguish the evangelicals' development theology from the oldline's.

First, while the evangelicals accept the oldline's twofold understanding of Christian ministry, they place greater emphasis on spiritual outreach. Each of these agencies has struggled with the delicate balancing act between food for the body and food for the soul. Staff are confronted with overwhelming and desperate physical deprivation; response to the simple physical needs of people can become all-consuming. Bryant Myers, vice president for corporate services at World Vision, notes that while the agency has always linked spiritual and material sides of its ministry "in word," it has sometimes struggled with the problem of how to combine them "in deed." Following a three-year consultation on "philosophy of mission," World Vision issued a policy paper strongly affirming the significance of spiritual ministry. As Myers puts it, World Vision came to the recognition that "there are two destinations for mankind, heaven or hell." "We had to realize," he reflects, "that we might be improving the standard of living for people, but they were still on the wrong path." As with the other evangelical agencies, World Vision stresses both the need for redemption in Christ and the need for renewed communities to reflect "Kingdom-like values." In this view concern for salvation includes the desire to help those who have been saved better reflect the transforming experience of Christ in their behavior, attitudes, and relationships.

The agencies also relate spiritual ministry to

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tangible results in economic affairs. Jerry Ballard, executive director of World Relief, notes that "unless people have a good concept of God's love for them, they may find it hard to be motivated to change their situation." Fred Gregory, executive director of World Concern, believes that acceptance of the Gospel can bring hope to the poor and liberation from fatalistic attitudes that are barriers to development.

Second, and more significant, while the oldline's theology is rooted in concern for distributive justice, the evangelicals' is centered in their understanding of human nature. "Man made in the image of God" has several specific implications for these agencies. First, it means that *all* people have inherent worth and are due the Christian's attentive concern. Relief and development assistance will be offered not only to fellow believers, but to people of other faiths as well. Second, all people have God-bestowed dignity. Abject poverty and the slow death of starvation are affronts to this dignity; the Christian's response is to help meet the basic physical needs of the poor. Evangelicals recognize that man's dignity requires much more than basic material provision: the ultimate goal in development is to help people "be all God intended them to be." At the core of man's dignity is his *freedom,* and the evangelicals seek to recognize that God-given freedom in implementing their development policies. "Unless people participate in the decision-making," says Fred Gregory, development "is not going to be a very liberating experience." Ballard believes that charitable activity must be designed in such a way as to avoid negatively affecting the self-esteem of the recipient.

Recognizing that man is but "a little lower than the angels," these groups also stress that man is sinful. For evangelicals, the effects of the Fall are pervasive, affecting individuals, communities—even nature itself. In this view, all sufferings and evils, including poverty, can be traced to sin. This is particularly stressed by Transformation International and World Relief. For example, Robert Hancock of Transformation International argues that greed, dishonesty, and moral compromise are more a reflection of individual character than they are of economic and political systems. "The problem is not in the economic system, but in moral degeneration."

Some evangelical development leaders follow their oldline counterparts—at least part way—in speaking of "structural" sin. Bryant Myers believes that "institutions are fallen," and that "evangelical theology is badly underdeveloped on the concept of the principalities and powers. Both individuals and structures need transformation." Dr. Manfred Grellert, regional vice president for Latin America at World Vision and a Brazilian theologian heavily influenced by liberation theology, goes even further. For him, the international economic order embodies structural injustice; it is "anti-Kingdom." Grellert concedes that "evil resides in the human heart," but he sees its presence also "in socio-economic and political structures. These structures are at the service of a privileged few... and they generate misery and poverty for many."

Because their theology of development rests on their understanding of who man is and what he is meant for, it is not surprising that the evangelicals define development as more than the alleviation of poverty. World Concern believes that there are choices people can make in determining their futures. The agency speaks of liberating people from the bondage of contemplating only "what is" and helping them to see "what can be." Its intention is to increase people's freedom over their entire lives—not just their economic life. Similarly, World Vision defines development as "a process by which people in a community work together to remove those individual and corporate barriers which prevent them from moving toward a better future." It recognizes that some of those barriers are internal—individual feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness—while others are external—oppressive political, economic, and social structures. Tetsunao Yamamori, president of Food for the Hungry, defines development as "a process of positive change by a community or an individual in values, behavior, attitude, and the quality of life."

The evangelical agencies differ within and between themselves in their attitudes toward dependency theory. Dr. Grellert of World Vision wholly accepts it; he believes that "underdevelopment and development are two different sides of the same coin." But his does not appear to be the dominant view among World Vision executives. His colleague Bryant Myers agrees with Grellert that the "results of the international economic system are unambiguously unjust" and that the gap between rich and poor is increasing; unlike Grellert, however, Myers sees shortcomings in dependency theory. It is too simplistic, he says, and tends to search for an economic answer to a problem that is "fundamentally spiritual." However, Myers estimates that many World Vision field workers in Latin America would tend to agree more with Grellert's position than with his own: "many field staff personnel buy the North-South paradigm of a rich core that oppresses the periphery."

Leaders of World Concern and World Relief have adopted two components of the dependency theory: that the "gap" between the rich and the poor countries is widening, and that the international economic system consistently favors the "haves" at the expense of the "have-nots." For example, Gregory of World Concern argues that "economic power is becoming more and more concentrated in fewer and fewer hands" and that "the gap between those who have and those who don't is becoming greater." Ballard believes that it is the functioning of the international economic order that has produced the Third World's crushing debt, and he suggests that debt forgiveness may be in order.

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Yamamori of Food for the Hungry and Hancock of Transformation International are the most skeptical of dependency theory. For example, Hancock calls dependency theory "simplistic" and argues that "win-win" relationships are possible in our global economic system, as the experiences of several East Asian countries attest. Yamamori is also impressed with the Four Little Dragons and believes that their commitment to economic growth, encouragement of private enterprise, and willingness to compete vigorously in the international export market have been the keys to their success.

Even those within the evangelical agencies who see some truth in dependency theory join their more skeptical colleagues in rejecting outright its call for a global redistribution of resources as the key to alleviating Third World poverty. Evangelicals, because of their appreciation of individual freedom and their sober assessment of personal evil, are naturally suspicious of government-led redistribution schemes. Rather than redistribution, evangelicals place emphasis on the importance of wealth creation. Mike Still, an economist for World Vision, sees wealth creation as the best strategy to combat Third World poverty. Yamamori states simply that "new wealth can and should be created.... There is no limit to value added." Hancock believes that wealth creation is the only enduring solution to poverty. World Relief emphasizes micro-economic development and operates programs aimed at improving farmers' productivity. Fred Gregory argues that "wealth is dynamic ... not static," and adds that "for someone to get ahead, someone else does not have to be diminished."

Taken all in all, the views of the five evangelical agencies seem more attuned to the realities of economic development than do those of oldline groups. The evangelicals show more awareness of and willingness to learn from the revisionist studies of recent years. For that reason, they would seem better suited than the oldline to establish a "solidarity with the poor" that would in fact go beyond rhetoric and offer genuine hope for long-range alleviation of Third World poverty.

VI

There have been signs in recent years that U.S. foreign aid policy is beginning to take into account the emerging scholarly consensus on development. Though a combination of bureaucratic inertia and reluctance to forsake old orthodoxies has hindered those developments, the policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations indicate receptiveness to new thinking. An opening therefore exists for Christians to participate in the defining of a new foreign aid policy consensus. Evangelical relief and development agencies like those described above could help in a variety of ways to further this reformation.

First, evangelicals can expand their "theology of development," building on foundations they have already laid. An "evangelical statement of development" along the lines of the impressive NAE Peace, Freedom, and Security Studies *Guidelines* would provide a valuable resource for foreign aid policy makers. As it happens, a number of far-sighted activists have already taken steps toward development of such a document.

Forty evangelicals, concerned over the emergence of liberationist currents within evangelicalism, met in 1987 in Villars, Switzerland to consider the proper role of evangelicals in "opting for the poor." The Villars participants noted a number of disturbing tendencies in development thought within the churches:

> ... the tendency [of development ministries] to focus on meeting material needs without sufficient emphasis on spiritual needs ... the attempt to synthesize Marxist categories and Christian concepts, to equate economic liberation with salvation ... the emphasis on redistribution of wealth as the answer to poverty and deprivation without recognizing the value of incentive, opportunity, creativity, and economic and political freedom ... and the attraction to centrally controlled economies and coercive solutions despite the failures of such economies and their consistent violation of the rights of the poor.

The conference's resulting "Villars Statement on Relief and Development" represents a first step toward a comprehensive evangelical vision for development. The statement notes that the "causes of hunger and deprivation ... are spiritual as well as material and can only be dealt with adequately insofar as the spiritual dimension is taken into account." Its policy recommendations include support for private property and for "the family as the basic social and economic unit."

Second, evangelicals can press their broad definition of human development in the public debate over foreign aid. If development is understood as something including but transcending the alleviation of material poverty, internal economic and human rights policies of recipient countries may be scrutinized far more carefully than has been the case in the past. If development is conceived of as both the alleviation of poverty and an increased scope of human freedom, recipient countries' records on religious tolerance, democratization, and human rights may take their place alongside traditional strategic considerations in decisions on foreign aid.

Third, evangelicals can improve the quality of "development education." Thus far, efforts to inform the public by (mainly oldline) Christian development agencies have been limited to relating the gruesome facts of human deprivation and hunger. Rarely are explanations for poverty given other than the standard dependency arguments. Internal causes of poverty, such as corrupt or oppressive political systems, are

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neglected—unless the nation under consideration is a right-wing military dictatorship. If the subject is poverty in Ethiopia, Vietnam, or Kampuchea, seldom are the disastrous political and economic policies of their totalitarian Marxist-Leninist governments raised as possible explanations.

Fourth, based on their conception of development, evangelicals can press the argument for three critical "pro-poor" institutions: private property rights, the rule of law, and democracy. The religious left views private property rights with suspicion, believing that they lead to the massive and unjust accumulation of wealth by the wealthy. Nicholas Eberstadt notes that in societies where private property rights are disregarded, the state can, in the "interests of the poor," expropriate at will the property of the wealthy. But surely, he argues, a state with sufficient power to steal from the rich and powerful may with even greater ease steal from the poor and vulnerable. Private property rights, in other words, ought to be understood as potentially critical for the poor as well as the rich.

Evangelicals can also press the rule of law—with its attendant virtues of order, fairness, and impartiality—as a precondition to sustainable development. The absence of the rule of law may stymie development in that it may adversely affect the investment climate, individual savings rates, and productivity. Furthermore, the rule of law, as Eberstadt contends, "affords to society's most vulnerable members the protection that can only be bought by wealthy people in a 'state-of-nature' situation."

Moreover, evangelicals can publicize the democracy-development connection. They already recognize the critical role of local participation by citizens in development projects. Local citizens ought to be involved both because they best know their own needs and because their freedom and dignity are demeaned if they are not included. Evangelicals should press the analogy to the national level, arguing that democratic and participatory forms of government best "fit" with man's freedom and capacity to decide what is best for his own welfare. Evangelicals need to carry the argument for expansion of civil and political freedoms in the underdeveloped world because too many other Christians have succumbed to the Marxist siren song of bread before freedom. Evangelicals must remind those who argue that the poor lack interest in "bourgeois" civil rights and political freedoms that none of us lives by bread alone. They can also publicize the strong empirical evidence linking freedom to material prosperity and authoritarian and totalitarian control to poverty.

Finally, evangelical private organizations can encourage vigorous consideration of government assistance programs to the private sector. Government-to-government transfers have often failed to improve the lot of the poor, either because they were diverted by corrupt leaders into Swiss bank accounts or because they enabled ruling elites to persist in following repressive political policies and/or destructive economic agendas. As Eberstadt has eloquently commented: "Transfers of wealth enlarge the capacity of recipient governments to pursue their intentions; they do not change those intentions. If the intentions have consequences that are economically destructive, the government will be empowered to act more destructively." In contrast, government-to-private-sector projects bring funding close to local problems, and they use resources in ways that villagers themselves, and not distant government bureaucrats, determine are most efficacious in addressing local needs.

Evangelicals are poised at the cutting edge of a reformation in development policy. Their contribution to that reformation can be significant if they forthrightly reject conceptions of solidarity with the poor that in fact lead to greater suffering for the poor. The task is theirs, in solidarity with oldline and Catholic co-activists willing to share an empirical temper, a comprehensive conception of development, and an appreciation for market-oriented economic models. For the sake of the poor, one hopes that the opportunity will not be missed. FT

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Review Essay

Between Jews and Christians

Russell Hittinger

JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE: A JEWISH JUSTIFICATION. By DAVID NOVAK. *Oxford University Press. 194 pp. $24.95.*

David Novak's new book is a theologically learned and philosophically nuanced investigation of grounds for Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is written from within the resources of Jewish theology in order to locate theological—in contrast to merely pragmatic—reasons for interfaith dialogue. The book, however, goes well beyond an in-house Jewish effort to justify dialogue with Christians. From the outset, Novak contends that the main issue for this dialogue is no longer how Jews and Christians can work out a political or civil *modus vivendi*, but rather how either can speak theologically without yielding to secularism. In this sense, the book is a justification for theological discourse itself. It is a primer on the problems of sustaining biblically based theology in the twentieth century.

Novak begins by examining three Jewish objections to dialogue with Christians. The first holds that nothing has substantively changed since the middle ages. Dialogue may be required for practical purposes, but not for religious ones. As Novak points out, this point of view is not peculiarly anti-Christian; it reflects a general rejection of the non-Jewish world. The second objection rejects religious dialogue because Christianity is taken to be essentially and incorrigibly anti-Semitic. The Holocaust, in this view, is simply an extension of the tradition of Christendom. The third position sees some value in dialogue, but only insofar as the singularity of either religious tradition is bracketed. Proponents of this view would filter dialogue through the secular language of inalienable rights, constitutional order, or any common ground that does not explicitly presuppose theological convictions unique to parties in the dialogue.

Novak argues that all three positions misunderstand the "pervasive context of modern secularism." Christendom no longer exists as a political-ecclesiastical order; even in weaker sociological terms the modern society in the West could scarcely be called "Christian." Furthermore, modern political and ideological expressions of anti-Semitism can hardly be portrayed as an extension of medieval anti-Judaism. One cannot fail to take into account the anti-Christian character of fascism and communism. Finally, the notion of a secularly based common ground is an illusion: the secular understanding of moral autonomy is not a neutral position but is rather the principal alternative to both Judaism and Christianity. It is a mistake, Novak argues, to believe that the moral and political language of autonomy could ever be a fit instrument for expressing what is common to the theonomous ethics of Judaism and Christianity.

Throughout the book, Novak makes the grounds for interfaith dialogue more rather than less difficult to achieve. His criteria for dialogue are at least twofold. First, each party must be able to recognize himself in the characterization of the other one. Second, each participant's characterization of himself must be seen as consistent with his own religious tradition. Novak's rules of recognition require that the dialogue from either side remain tradition-dependent, and hence he allows no easy appeals either to maverick theologizing or to translating theological traditions into the universalist Esperanto of autonomous rights.

At the same time, Novak's case against secularism does not permit the fantasy of secularism's replacement by a Judeo-Christian civil order that would uproot secular science, law, or economics. The dream of restoration of a premodern social order is out of the question. The effort to resist secularism in order to sustain tradition-dependent theological discourse, even while finding a necessary place for the secular agenda, constitutes, as Novak admits, "no small task." He further complicates that task by stipulating that neither party to the discussion is permitted to manipulate the grounds of discourse by a theological scheme that subsumes its interlocutor under either a greater generic category or a higher singularity—as, for example, in the Christian position that Judaism is a teleologically inferior precursor to Christianity, or in the Jewish position that gentile adherence to the Noahide laws represents only a preliminary morality en route to the Torah.

In short, then, Novak closes the doors most easily opened to the dialogue, at least the historically familiar ones. For this, he is to be congratulated. It is rare today to find a theologian in any tradition willing to make theological discourse more rather than less difficult and demanding.

Russell Hittinger *is spending the year as a visiting professor in the Department of Politics at Princeton University. He is the author of* A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory *(Notre Dame, 1987).*

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The middle chapters of the book work from within the historical resources of Jewish theology, in particular the ancient and medieval interpretations of how gentiles stand under the Noahide laws. The Noahide laws, Novak explains, designate not only the pre-Judaic conditions of a theonomous morality (the moral law as preceding Sinai), but also something co-Judaic, standing as it were on the horizon of Judaism (the moral law applicable to gentiles in the present). Novak examines the opinions of Rabbenu Tam (twelfth century) and Rabbi Menahem Ha-Meiri (fourteenth century), among others, in order to answer the question, What is to be made of Christians, who are neither pre-Judaic nor polytheistic gentiles of the sort encountered in antiquity?

For ancient and medieval Jewish theorists, a key issue was whether Christians are adequately non-idolatrous, such that one could say that they not only observe the Noahide laws, but do so in a way correlated with a minimally correct monotheism. If the two are correlated, then Jews can view Christians as participating in a moral order that is theologically recognizable, and at least quasi-independent of Jewish enforcement. Novak's work in this area is fascinating, for it throws light upon a theological approach to natural moral law that is almost always overlooked in favor of the metaphysically based natural-law theories of the high middle ages.

Novak also has an intriguing chapter on Maimonides, who held that Christianity is a derivative and potential Judaism. Novak rejects this model for both philosophical and theological reasons. Of particular interest is his treatment of Maimonides' ambivalence about non-Judaic monotheisms—Christian and Islamic. As an Aristotelian, Maimonides underscored the primacy of speculative rationality, and on this score Islamic monotheism seemed speculatively superior to Christian trinitarianism. But in terms of what Novak calls the "practical," Maimonides respected the closer connection between Christianity and Judaism in their common biblicism. Not surprisingly, Novak suggests that the common biblicism is a more promising context for interfaith dialogue than Maimonides' speculative system. It would have been preferable if Novak had not depicted these two perspectives as a difference in emphasis between speculative and practical rationality, for the shift to what Jews and Christians share by virtue of the biblical narrative relocates both theory and practice to a different perspective, one perhaps best described as historical. This is an important qualification to make, lest Novak's distinction be used to underwrite the post-Kantian notion that practical rationality can supply reasons where theory is deficient. Catholics (like myself) would never recognize themselves or their tradition in that arrangement, though they would certainly agree with Novak that the faith elicited by biblical revelation is a superior realization or perfection of speculative rationality than Maimonidean speculations on trans-lunar astronomicals.

Two additional chapters treat the quest for the Jewish Jesus and Franz Rosenzweig's theology of interfaith dialogue. The former focuses mainly on Martin Buber, and contains useful discussions on the danger of religious syncretism, as well as on how Jewish-Christian dialogue gets short-circuited by a de-christologized Jesus and a de-legalized Torah. The latter examines the dialogue between Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) and Eugen Rosenstock (a Jewish convert to Christianity). The exchange between Rosenzweig and Rosenstock was pioneering in that their common enmity to secularism provided a point of commonality that superseded the older problematics of Christendom. Novak makes a similar point about that commonality, but he also makes it clear that this *via negativa* approach to dialogue is by itself insufficient for sustaining productive theological discourse. Beyond that, Novak suggests that Rosenzweig (perhaps because of his Hegelianism) was insufficiently attentive to the need to respect the singularity of the Christian religion. Rosenzweig held that Christianity is the universalist, missionizing wing of biblical revelation, in contrast to Jewish particularism, which emphasizes the role of the Jews as the unique people of God. But Christianity, Novak points out, no less than Judaism, needs to resist any loss of its religious and historical singularity. This is particularly true of Christianity in the modern, secular environment, in which there are pressures to reduce theological terms to those of a vague religion-in-general. What is suggested here is that Jews need to help Christians preserve a distinct theological perspective, if for no other reason than to prevent the dialogue between them from devolving into such weak generic terms that it ceases to be theological.

The book's final chapter, "A New Theology of Jewish-Christian Dialogue," is ambitious and philosophically challenging. Novak examines three different ways in which the singular—a particular religion or revelation—can be related to the general. First, the singular can extend itself to the general, in the way Roman civil law was extended to the empire via the rubric of a *ius gentium*, where non-Roman subjects of the empire were treated as resident aliens. Second, the singular can be viewed as a starting point en route to the general—as the Stoics conceived of the individual as a starting point for reaching cosmic harmony, or as Kant held that the individual, self-legislating will is a point of entry into the kingdom of ends. Third, the singular can be viewed as the teleological achievement of the general; thus, for example, Maimonides' potency-act model served as a way to explain how the Noahide laws shaped the general, gentile mass out of which the Torah represented the full, singular actualization and completion.

Novak gives cogent reasons why none of these models is very helpful for interfaith dialogue. All are

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imperialistic, for they subsume the particularity of traditions to a general cosmic order: either to a more comprehensive generality, or to a higher singularity. Novak's alternative is to argue that the dialogue should emphasize the *possibility* of revelation which grounds irreducible theological traditions rather than one or another general scheme of human potential for religion. Human perfections—for example the moral and intellectual perfections of the prophet—might provide necessary, but certainly not sufficient, conditions for revelation.

The possibility of a revealed word and a human response to it is something quite different than a set of human potentials being immanently realized. In the latter model, both the divine word and the covenantal community would only be needed to trigger, or to remove impediments to, the development of the natural potential. The logic of possibility, however, leaves the framework of revelation and covenant free of necessity. The divinely initiated revelation, the human response, and the eventual outcome are kept free of any necessary potency-act reductions (Aristotle) or a necessary progression of Reason (Hegel). Believers are thus relieved of the need to construct metaphysical arguments to absorb the positions of their rivals.

Novak is perhaps a bit harsh in his judgment of the potency-act model. Karl Rahner, of whose work Novak's is reminiscent, managed to make many of the same points without jettisoning the potency-act background altogether. Rahner, relying on Aquinas, spoke of the *potentia obedientialis,* the obediential potency, to be transformed in the light of revelation. One can try to avoid use of Aristotelian terminology altogether, but it is not clear that we can even discuss the matter of human openness to the revealed word without making some assumptions about the determinate nature of the being who stands open—frogs presumably have no obediential potency or openness to respond (rationally, volitionally) to the revealed word. This objection, however, does not detract from Novak's main point: that any effort to unpack revelation itself from a stock of human potentials would undercut the central convictions of both Judaism and Christianity.

Novak contends that both Jews and Christians must bring their fundamental philosophical and theological convictions to the dialogue. By philosophical, he means theories about human nature and sociability; by theological, he means theories about the capacity for relationship with God. Here, he insists, there is a "common anthropological border between Judaism and Christianity." Along this border can be discerned a common Judeo-Christian ethic, which is distinguished from a common Judeo-Christian faith (which Novak, of course, rejects). The four central tenets of the common ethic are: (1) The human person is created by God for the primary purpose of being related to God; (2) This relationship is primarily practical, its content being a response to the commandments; (3) The human person is created as a social being, the sociability being a condition for covenant with God; (4) The ultimate fulfillment of human persons, individually and collectively, lies in a future and universal redemptive act by God, standing on the unattainable historical horizon.

One can argue with Novak's second tenet, for in saying that the relationship is "primarily practical," he would seem to give short shrift to the possibility that volitional activity in relation to either divine or human persons transcends (or ought to transcend) making and doing. Can, for example, the notion of love be adequately handled in terms of the "practical"? (It might be noted that this is not the only place in the book where the meaning of "practical" for Novak remains unclear or problematic.)

Novak's other tenets stand as clear statements of the component parts of a theonomous ethic. He hits the nail on the head when he points out that both Judaism and Christianity conceive of the moral life as a *vocatio*—the response of a being called by a divine other. This understanding stands in sharp contrast to the secular ethic of autonomy, in which the individual is principally responsible to respond to the voice of his or her own reason.

One has to admire Novak's way of mapping the common moral border between Judaism and Christianity. His two central points are correct and clearly drawn: (1) The common border is posited from their respective theological traditions, and hence the border is not a detachable minimalistic ethic; (2) The common ethic consists of a moral theonomy rather than autonomy, and despite some terminological overlap with modern secularistic ethics, it represents a substantively different understanding of moral order.

Assuming, then, that Novak is on the right track in his formulation of the common ethic, there remains not so much a criticism as a question. What are Jews and Christians to make of the secular civil, legal, and moral order which makes autonomy the principal value? The question is reminiscent of that raised by Joseph Raz in *The Morality of Freedom* (1986), where he points out that even if the modern doctrines of individual rights do not adequately account for, in the sense of explicating, the value of autonomy, it is still true to say that the autonomous life is the main value and unifying ideal of modern societies. Raz's question is how these societies are to treat pockets of believers who reject the notion that autonomy is the principal value and goal of morality and law. His response is tentative and groping, but he suggests that secular legal and moral culture cannot remain true to its own vision without attempting the assimilation of these practitioners of a premodern ethic.

The question for Novak is similar, but the answer will be more problematic. The common moral border between Judaism and Christianity is not a common faith, but it is drawn (to use a stronger term, posited)

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in terms of theology. It is not clear what resources Novak leaves us with in drawing a common border with those who hearken to the voice of moral autonomy. Novak gives no indication that Jews and Christians can, or ought to, develop a natural-law theory independent of their respective traditions and theologies. The underlying conviction of some Christian natural-law theorists is that although believers and non-believers have different grounds with regard to theology, they share a common philosophical ground in the doctrine of natural rights. See, for example, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's recent essay "Seeking a Common Ground on Human Rights" (*DePaul Law Review,* Vol. 36), in which he argues that the legal theory of Ronald Dworkin is a reliable guide for locating common ground, metaphysical and religious differences notwithstanding.

It may be true that the common ground is superficial, and for the most part only terminological (in the case of Dworkin, it is unlikely that we are speaking of the same ethic in any respect), but the language of natural rights allowed at least a half-truth to constitute common discourse about principles in the civil and legal polity. Should this philosophical tradition of natural rights be reworked to make it more friendly to a theonomous ethic? Perhaps the autonomous ethic can be shown to be a mistake on philosophical grounds—a demonstration that might be worth undertaking, if for no other reason than to avoid a two-truth situation. As long, that is, as the principle of autonomy is a philosophically plausible ground for human conduct, it is difficult to see how believers can avoid the problem of theonomy for the Sabbath and autonomy for the rest of the week.

What alternatives are left in our respective theological traditions? How, for instance, would the Noahide laws apply to modern, secularized gentiles who would seem to be more accurately characterized as *post*-Judaic and Christian, than pre-Judaic or even co-Judaic? In his treatment of ancient and medieval Jewish opinion, Novak shows that a merely pragmatic adherence to the laws, without some correlation to the theological ground, is not sufficient for judging the gentiles as having any moral independence; that is to say, such adherence lacks the requisite condition for self-governance and enforcement. Does this not have an explosive implication for our civil and legal order? Novak clearly and explicitly rejects the idea that believers can uproot the secular scientific, legal, and economic culture. How one leaves this in place while abandoning the claims about moral autonomy is, as he says, "no small task."

Novak's book rightly puts aside for now the difficult questions about dialogue between believers and non-believers. He is, I believe, entirely correct to focus upon the theological terms of the dialogue between Jews and Christians. And on that score, he is not only challenging but successful. *Jewish-Christian Dialogue* deserves the widest possible attention and consideration among believers. We shall be interested in seeing how, in his future work, its author goes on to treat the vexing issues concerning dialogue between believers and non-believers. FT

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Books In Review

Liberalism and Catholicism

Free Persons And The Common Good. By Michael Novak. *Madison Books. 244 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by **Robert Benne**

A number of commentators—among them David Hollenbach, John Langan, and myself—have argued that the American Catholic Bishops' pastoral letters, and even the Pope's recent encyclicals, represent in some important ways a rapprochement with liberal ideas and practices. As Catholic leaders have reflected on the reality of liberal societies worldwide in the light of Catholic social teaching, they have found themselves involved in a dialectical process. While they have relied on the Catholic tradition to correct certain liberal errors or excesses, they have at the same time learned that elements of Catholic social thought might themselves require reconsideration in light of liberal ideas and experience.

Jacques Maritain prefigured this rapprochement in 1946 with his influential book, *The Person and the Common Good.* The great proponent of "integral humanism" attempted in that work to bring together the gifts of liberalism and the strengths of the classic Catholic doctrine of the common good. Admiring this effort greatly, Michael Novak offers his new book as both homage to Maritain and an advancement of that same project. Novak elaborates and extends his affirmation of the American experiment in democratic capitalism by probing the liberal roots of that experiment.

Novak's main thesis is that liberalism, especially in its American form, represents in both theory and practice a notion of the common good that deserves recognition and appreciation. This notion, if taken seriously by the Catholic tradition, will modify the classic conception of the common good for the better by liberating it from its premodern form, which has bent it in static, paternalistic, and statist directions.

The real heroes of the book are de Tocqueville and Madison, who conceptualized and helped construct the liberal theory and practice of the common good. They had many precursors and numerous followers, but they provide for Novak the main clues about liberalism's notion of the common good.

In terms of its formal principle, the liberal common good is "order unplanned." It is the result, not specified in advance, of the activities of free individuals cooperating with each other in economic, social, and cultural spheres. This liberal notion of the common good differs from the older one in that it does not assume that the social ordering of the common good must be the result of the conscious intentions, aims, and purposes of an organizing center, usually the state, and that that ordering must be uniform. Novak argues on the contrary that the common good of modern liberal societies is dynamic, open, pluralistic, and serendipitous, appropriate to free persons who reflect and choose in close interdependence with other human beings.

The substance of liberalism's theory and practice of the common good has to do with *institutions, habits, virtues,* and *limits.* First, as liberalism liberated humans from oppressions of conscience, from tyranny and from poverty, it invented appropriate *institutions:*

> *In the moral and cultural order,* religious liberty and the separation of church and state, the free press, rights and practices of free speech, and the independence of universities, the media and other private associations from the state; *in the political order,* limited and constitutional government, institutions of human rights, representative government based upon checks and balances, and free political parties; *in the economic order,* the relatively free market, patent laws and copyrights, labor unions, corporations of many sorts, partnerships and unincorporated businesses, ease of credit and business formation, the stock association and business company.

These institutions are regulated by general rules and laws designed to bring to all the benefits of cooperation and to protect institutions from arbitrary interventions. They aim at fair play.

Within this institutional and legal framework, two primary liberal *habits* are expressed—the habits of association and of "self-interest rightly understood." With regard to the first habit, liberal societies, especially America, have been characterized by a vast system of private associations in which free persons voluntarily cooperate to pursue various causes. Humans have a natural inclination to secure the benefits of voluntary cooperation. Far from being the tradition of atomistic individualism, liberalism has nurtured the associational individual. The profusion of associations that issued from this associational individual has created an unplanned community of communities, an extensive system of ordered natural liberty.

The second habit of this new notion of the common good is the republican theme of "self-interest, rightly understood." This phrase from de Tocqueville helpfully distinguishes self-interest from selfishness. Novak points out that self-interest rightly understood leads

Robert Benne *is the Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, and author of* The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism.

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humans to attach their interests, neutral in themselves, to worthy and socially beneficial projects. "The principle of self-interest rightly understood teaches humans that they are social animals, that they have need of one another, and that their own self-development depends upon their becoming social beings.... (It) attaches the interests of the self to the public interest."

Without denying the need for the classical virtues in their citizenry, the new liberal societies fostered their own distinctive *virtues* that contributed to a revised notion of the common good. These republican virtues contrasted with those of the older aristocratic societies:

> The free person in democratic societies requires moral skills beyond those of the citizens of the *ancien régime*: enterprise more than resignation; civic virtue more than familial piety; respect for law and lawmaking rather than submission to command; self-improvement and self-realization more than contentment with an assigned station; skills in practical compromise and loyal opposition rather than an unbending moral absolutism; and yet others less often brought to awareness.

FINALLY, the liberal notion of the common good admits that there are human goals and purposes that cannot be encompassed by a socially-defined common good. Liberal society insists on room—geographical, psychological, and spiritual—for the exercise of the human spirit in all its creative individuality. It resists the insistent tendencies of state and society to intrude on what is essentially private and intimate. The human good is not perfectly coincident with society's common good. This limitation on society's penchant for interference is paradoxically part of liberalism's notion of the common good.

NOVAK has tried to make this a genuine work of conciliation. He attempts to bring together classical liberals (von Mises, von Hayek) with classical conservatives (Burke). He bows to all who cherish the idea of the common good. He attempts to take seriously the criticisms of the liberal tradition. But underlying the congeniality is a tenacious commitment to the thesis that liberal capitalist societies in the west not only *do* have a version of the common good at work in their practice, but that that version is superior to that practiced in "Catholic" countries shaped more by the classic Catholic tradition. He believes that much talk about the common good is distorted by romantic conceptions about what ought to be, and is oblivious to the reality of the common good in liberal societies in general and in the American experiment in particular. Thus there is a polemical thrust in the book, as evidenced for example by an extensive critique of Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart*.

Free Persons and the Common Good is not as easy to read as it might be, partly because it is rather loosely organized. There are too many meandering excursions into eddies of thought only indirectly related to the author's project. Furthermore, Novak is a bit too uncritical of liberal thought and practice. He does, it is true, point briefly to some of the dark emergences in American society—its hedonism and decadence and the betrayal by some of its citizens of "their own inner agencies of insight and choice." But these are minor notes in his otherwise celebratory affirmation of the "marriage of two traditions" in America.

Nevertheless, this is one more significant contribution in Novak's ongoing project to defend western liberal democracy in the face of facile dismissals by its critics. It advances discussion of a very important topic—how liberty and the common good can effectively be held together in a constructive way.

Modernism & Its Consequences

RITES OF SPRING: THE GREAT WAR AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN AGE. By MODRIS ECKSTEINS. *Houghton Mifflin (A Peter Davison Book). 396 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **John P. Sisk**

MODRIS Eksteins' disturbing and fascinating book ranges between the Sergei Diaghilev-managed opening night performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in Paris on May 29, 1913, and the suicide of Hitler in 1945. The book's field of action is Western civilization, but its primary focus is on Germany between the two World Wars. Its prologue is set in Venice where the death from cholera of the artist Gustav Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* prepares for the book's thematic concern with the "colossal romanticism of our era" in which life has been subordinated to art.

Rites of Spring is thus a book about the hubris of modernism and the consequence of its search "for the holy grail that is the 'total art form.'" In Germany, "the modernist nation *par excellence* of our century," the search was fueled, Professor Eksteins says, by the sibling relationship between avant-garde and storm trooper in which "Nazi kitsch may bear a blood relationship to the highbrow religion of art proclaimed by many moderns."

Eksteins' decision to present his material in the form of a drama divided into acts and scenes is an attempt to find a compromise between history and fiction in an era when existence has become aestheticized. He risks, of course, the very consequence of blending life with art that is his subject. But he knows what he is doing, and most importantly, he knows that he is not

JOHN P. SISK *is Arnold Professor of the Humanities Emeritus at Gonzaga University.*

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simply attacking the aesthetic dimension of reality. One might say that he clarifies history by a discriminate use of the weapons of an adversary whose totalistic commitment to a regenerating novelty is, like Diaghilev's or Hitler's, a rejection of history.

The first act gives us the prologue to World War One in Paris and Berlin and the unanticipated appalling fact of it in Flanders Field—if anything, made more appalling by the spontaneous Christmas truce of 1914. The second act carries us through the war to the point where "modernism, which in its prewar form was a culture of hope, a vision of synthesis, would turn to a culture of nightmare." The third act, which begins in Paris on May 21, 1927, with the arrival of Charles Lindbergh ("The New Christ"), concludes with the *liebestod* marriage of Hitler and Eva Braun in the Fuehrer bunker and the frolicking *danse macabre* that followed in the chancellery canteen when it was clear that the Fuehrer was dead.

So the story of the modern world between May 29, 1913, and May 28, 1945, is the now familiar story of a passage from euphoria to disillusion, a passage almost compulsively repeated in the art of modernism and postmodernism. Paul Fussell has had his say on this subject in *The Great War and Modern Memory*; indeed, readers who know Fussell's book will have it constantly in mind as they read Eksteins' first two acts. Fussell is also good on the aestheticization of war, as among others is Paul Johnson in *Modern Times*. But there is no redundancy here. These books complement one another. This is apparent, for instance, in Fussell's and Eksteins' treatment of Eric Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Eksteins, one might say, repeats what Fussell says about the expression of disillusionment in Remarque's novel, but his more extensive concern (Fussell confines himself to the British experience on the Western front during World War One) is with the novel as a reflection of the political and emotional postwar environment that makes it a factor in the rise of the Third Reich.

OTHER unmentioned books surface as one reads. No doubt the dramatic structure invites this reinforcing invasion of apparently disparate texts, just as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with its dramatic progression through murderous totalitarianism to nihilistic despair, now invites the reaffirming invasion of *Rites of Spring*. A good deal of Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* becomes relevant, particularly in its treatment of the figure Canetti calls the "Survivor," for whom the piles of dead before him are aesthetically indispensable to his self-enhance-

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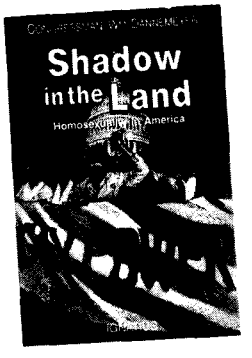

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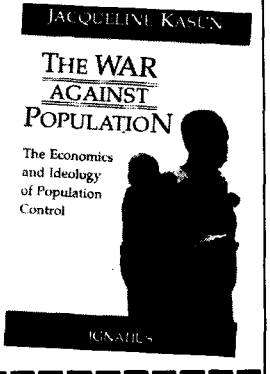

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ment. Eksteins' powerful emphasis on the millenarian impulse in German culture prior to both wars (to say nothing of the utopian expectation of a revolutionary renewal released by modernism in France and England as well) can remind one again how much there is in Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millenium* that must not be forgotten, especially in its chapter on the medieval heresy of the Free Spirit with its "elite of amoral supermen," those ecstatically liberated souls whose profound introversion could emerge as "a nihilistic megalomania." Indeed, Cohn provides the historical precedent for a Fuehrer who, says Eksteins, "looked on himself as the incarnation of the artist-tyrant Nietzsche called for."

"The notion of regeneration and rebirth," Eksteins writes, "was to be found in much avant-garde activity at the turn of the century." Martin Green has opened out this generalization in his *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins—Ascona, 1900-1920,* a book that could serve as a prologue to *Rites of Spring.* Inevitably, some of Green's characters appear in Eksteins' book, notably Mary Wigman, whose dance theories interested Albert Speer, and Rudolf von Laban, the ballet master of the Russian state theaters. For Laban the dance was the total art form that in Eksteins' book it is for Diaghilev, who as "a Nietzschean creation, a supreme egotist" anticipates the supreme impresario that Hitler was.

For both Green and Eksteins the priority of the aesthetic, especially when it is in combination with the liberated erotic, foreshadows the counterculture of the 1960s. Summarizing the intellectual and artistic ferment of the 1930s, Eksteins observes that "all these experiments seemed to capture the mystique of the avant-garde movements of an earlier day: to embrace life, to rebel against bourgeois sterility, to hate respectable society, and above all to revolt—to bring about a radical revaluation of all values." In World War One, he tempts us to say, the Germans were a New Left movement on fire with ideas of newness, regeneration, and change, while the British were a conservative and materialistic establishment imprisoned in the past. The shattering reversal of expectation that Germany experienced as it passed from the euphoria of August 1914 to the bitter aftermath of the Versailles Treaty is repeated in the declension of the Haight-Ashbury Summer of Love to the Charles Manson case.

Manson himself was in many ways a reprise of the Hitler he admired: each was a failed artist; each was a charismatic and aesthetic unifier who managed to convince others that through him they belonged in an elite of amoral supermen; each had a compelling vision of a Reich that needed only to be purified by a Final Solution to stand like an embodied total art form against a pusillanimous and visionless world order.

Eksteins speaks of the German "preoccupation with the administration of life, with technique, to the point where technique becomes a value and an aesthetic goal, not merely a means to an end." In Germany, unlike Britain, technical and vocational training was a matter of national and state concern well before World War One. In Hitler's Germany the blending of aesthetics and technique in radio, film, and the meticulously planned Nuremburg spectacles was indispensable to the Third Reich's tyranny of harmony. It was no wonder that Lindbergh's astounding achievement in 1927, representing as it did a Nietzschean triumph of will and technology, should be followed by his idolization in Nazi Germany, where Hermann Goering pinned on him the Service Cross of the German Eagle.

The admiration was mutual: Lindbergh viewed the western democracies as degenerate and incapable of competing with Germany. Later, as a prominent member of the America First Committee, he announced in an angry speech that "the three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt Administration." His belief that fascism was the wave of the future, Eksteins reminds us, was reflected in Anne Lindbergh's 1940 book *The Wave of the Future* (and shared, apparently, by the young Paul De Man).

EKSTEINS' book arrives on the scene at a time when it appears to some observers that there are still New Wave diehards who dream of a Germany capable of being a salvational force in a troubled and divided Europe. Daniel Johnson in the April, 1989 *Encounter,* for instance, calls attention to Arnulf Baring's recently published *Our New Megalomania: Germany Between East and West* with its warning that the new vision "is beginning to resemble the old, fatal German sense of mission, the tragic destiny which already clouded so many first-rate minds in World War I." In a similar vein, Gordon Craig in the June 15, 1989 *New York Review of Books* has compared the ideas of Jean-Marie Le Pen's xenophobic French National Front to the aspirations of the German Right, especially as it is being agitated by the writings of Franz Schoenhuber and his leadership of the right-wing Republican party.

Unsettling thoughts (to close on a personal note) to carry with one to the concentration camp at Dachau on a beautiful Sunday afternoon after high mass at the

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splendidly resurrected *Frauenkirche* in Munich. But perhaps after all it is the best place to take them. Dachau is a memorial, not a museum, I was advised, and the choice of words is right: in a museum one expects to find a past that is over and done with, easily available to the softening nostalgia of *le temps perdu*. A memorial is for that which in the interests of present and future must be refused such comfortable neutralization.

So one contemplates the appalling photographs and incineration ovens as memorials of a technical efficiency whose culmination in this place was the aestheticization of death. Here the Carmelite nuns have established their prayerful *Karmelkloster*, a memorial, as their founder and first prioress put it, of "what happens when the state becomes the substitute for God." So when the great doomsday bell sounds over the camp at three o'clock one may go into their chapel and hear the nuns recite their memorial office.

Eksteins' book begins with a memorial return to Verdun by way of two cemeteries: first, an automobile graveyard piled high with "smashed corpses, crumpled bodies, glistening skeletons," then that other cemetery where beneath symmetrical rows of white crosses lie those who fell in the battle of Verdun in the Great War. His book, he says, "will try to show that the two graveyards are related." In the process he shows that Dachau is part of the relation.

Catholicism in America

Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy. By George Weigel. *Paulist Press. 218 pp. $11.95.*

Reviewed by **Ralph McInerny**

Forty years ago, Evelyn Waugh wrote a piece for *Life* magazine entitled "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church." In a manner only mildly condescending and with controlled admiration for what the Irish had done for the Church in the United States, he saw a great shift in the center of gravity of Christendom. "It may well be that Catholics of today, in their own lifetime, may have to make enormous adjustments in their conception of the temporal nature of the Church. Many indeed are already doing so, and in the process turning their regard with hope and curiosity to the New World, where, it seems, Providence is schooling and strengthening a people for the historic destiny long borne by Europe."

Waugh marveled at what American Catholics had accomplished—the parishes, the education system, the widespread practice of the faith, the well-trained clergy, the press, the missionary orders, the contemplative renaissance. This was the era in which the Church was ranked "second only to Standard Oil" in corporate efficiency, an appraisal that provided J. F. Powers with an ironic chapter title in his magnificent novel *Morte d'Urban*. Waugh's account of the vibrant condition of Catholicism in those pre-conciliar years could profitably be read by current revisionists.

Waugh did not foresee what would require of him and many others far more painful adjustment than the hegemony of the New World, namely, the Second Vatican Council. The post-conciliar upheaval in the Church is a good part of the theme of George Weigel's *Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy*, but the author's intention is to think through the current controversies to a genuinely conciliar and conciliating approach to the problem of the Church's presence in the contemporary world, more particularly, its presence in the United States. The latter presence, he argues, is full of potential consequences for the former, the global, presence.

There two basic ways to *mis*understand Weigel's argument. The first, that he thinks everything is splendid in American society and that the Church should get its act together, largely by taking its cue from secular society, and become a player. The second is that everything is splendid in the Church, and its committees and pressure groups and lobbyists thus constitute sure guides for the country at large.

Like Waugh before him, Weigel views a fallen world and a flawed Church. Like Richard John Neuhaus, he refuses to see what's wrong with America as systemic. Indeed, he calls for both religious and political renewal and relies fruitfully, as he has before in his magisterial *Tranquillitas Ordinis*, on the work of John Courtney Murray. Following Murray, Weigel argues that the true Catholic doctrine of the relation of Church and state, that of Pope Gelasius I, is preserved in the American constitutional system. This argument is compatible with that which finds an indirect influence of the enlightened Salamanca school on Locke and the early development of American constitutional theory. The point in any case is that there is no theoretical enmity between the American republic and the Church. Indeed, like Neuhaus in *The Catholic Moment*, Weigel is inclined to see the Church as the best current defender of the genius of the Constitution. Of course, neither man thinks that buttressing of the civil

Ralph McInerny *is Director of the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame.*

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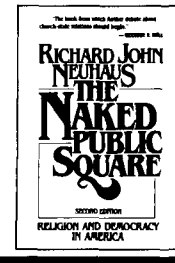

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order is the *point* of Catholicism. The Church has a global mission and nowhere sees man's destiny as exhausted by his citizenship. In short, Weigel provides what those acquainted with his work expect, a balanced, nuanced, indeed sinuous argument that gathers force as he maneuvers through the most vexed issues within the Church and the wider society.

One of the greatest impediments to the Church's contributing to the renewal of American democracy is what Weigel calls "the theological guild." Whatever their views on angels, members of the guild have two demonologies, one their incredible misunderstanding of Pope John Paul II (and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger), the other their mystifying rejection of democratic capitalism. Weigel's portrait of the world of the *National Catholic Reporter* is devastating (more so than his analysis of the opposite world of *The Wanderer*).

Those who have been in the forefront of the Blame America Firsters now would instruct the Vatican on what the Church must learn from the American experience. Michael Novak, a truly thoughtful theologian, has pointed out the inconsistency. Novak, whose theological analysis of democratic capitalism is a genuine contribution to Catholic social philosophy, is a pariah in the eyes of members of the theological guild who continue to look fondly on the socialism currently being rejected by the Marxists. But then it must be upsetting to have arguments you have been debunking now accepted by those you thought to defend.

The positive core of Weigel's book lies in his discussion of six key issues: (1) Church, State, and the Civil Public Square, (2) Abortion, (3) Peace, (4) the Politics of Witness, (5) Human Rights, and (6) Natural Law. The argument of the final subject on the list suggests that there is a discourse common to believers and unbelievers that provides the possibility of a common society. Weigel's discussion of natural law is by way of examples rather than theory, and it would be helpful to his project if he would develop his argument further. Perhaps he will take that as his next assignment.

Weigel concludes by suggesting that in order to seize the "Catholic moment" there must be a new understanding of the "public Church" (with less emphasis on attempts to influence national legislators and bureaucrats), a new axis of ecumenical dialogue (with particular attention to the conjunction of Catholics and evangelicals), a more self-critical and self-disciplining Catholic theological community, and, finally, a sense of the two most pressing questions of political theology: the intrinsic limits of the state and the substantive nature of the democratic republic.

George Weigel has managed in this excellent book to exemplify the level of discussion that he calls for. It should be read by all those interested in getting the discussion of Church/State out of its current rut.

Poverty and Public Policy

IN PURSUIT: OF HAPPINESS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT. BY CHARLES MURRAY. *Simon and Schuster. 341 pp. $19.95 (cloth); $9.95 (paper).*

***Reviewed by* Paul Heyne**

IN January of 1964 President Lyndon Johnson's Council of Economic Advisers helped launch the War on Poverty by including in its annual report a chapter on "The Problem of Poverty in America." The final paragraph glowed with confident resolution: "Poverty is not the inevitable fate of any man. The condition can be eradicated; and since it can be, it must be." A decade later the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin sponsored a conference to evaluate the degree to which the War on Poverty had been successful. In an overview essay introducing the published volume of conference papers, Robert Haveman, a distinguished student of anti-poverty policies, declared that "the day of income poverty as a major public issue would appear to be past."

No one was writing in that tone at the end of the 1980s. What has happened? Were both the optimistic forecasts of 1964 and the positive assessments of a decade later fundamentally misguided? Or did Ronald Reagan and the conservative movement undo and reverse the achievements of the War on Poverty? Among those who try to bring religious insights to bear on the problems of society, it is almost axiomatic that we experienced a moral failure. Franklin Garnwell, Dean and Professor of Ethics and Society in the University of Chicago Divinity School, declared in a recent chapel address:

> In truth, the presence or absence of poverty in this economically advanced society is now a matter open to public choice. However much in other times and places widespread want belonged among the things that could not be changed, it endures in our land only because we consent to it, or, at least, do not decide to cast it out.

Poverty, in short, is a matter of will, and our will has failed. Poverty persists in our society because of the selfishness and indifference of those with wealth and power.

It is easier to hold such a belief if you imagine that government "can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board." The metaphor is Adam Smith's, who went on to observe in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that "the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them," whereas "in the great

PAUL HEYNE *teaches economics at the University of Washington in Seattle.*

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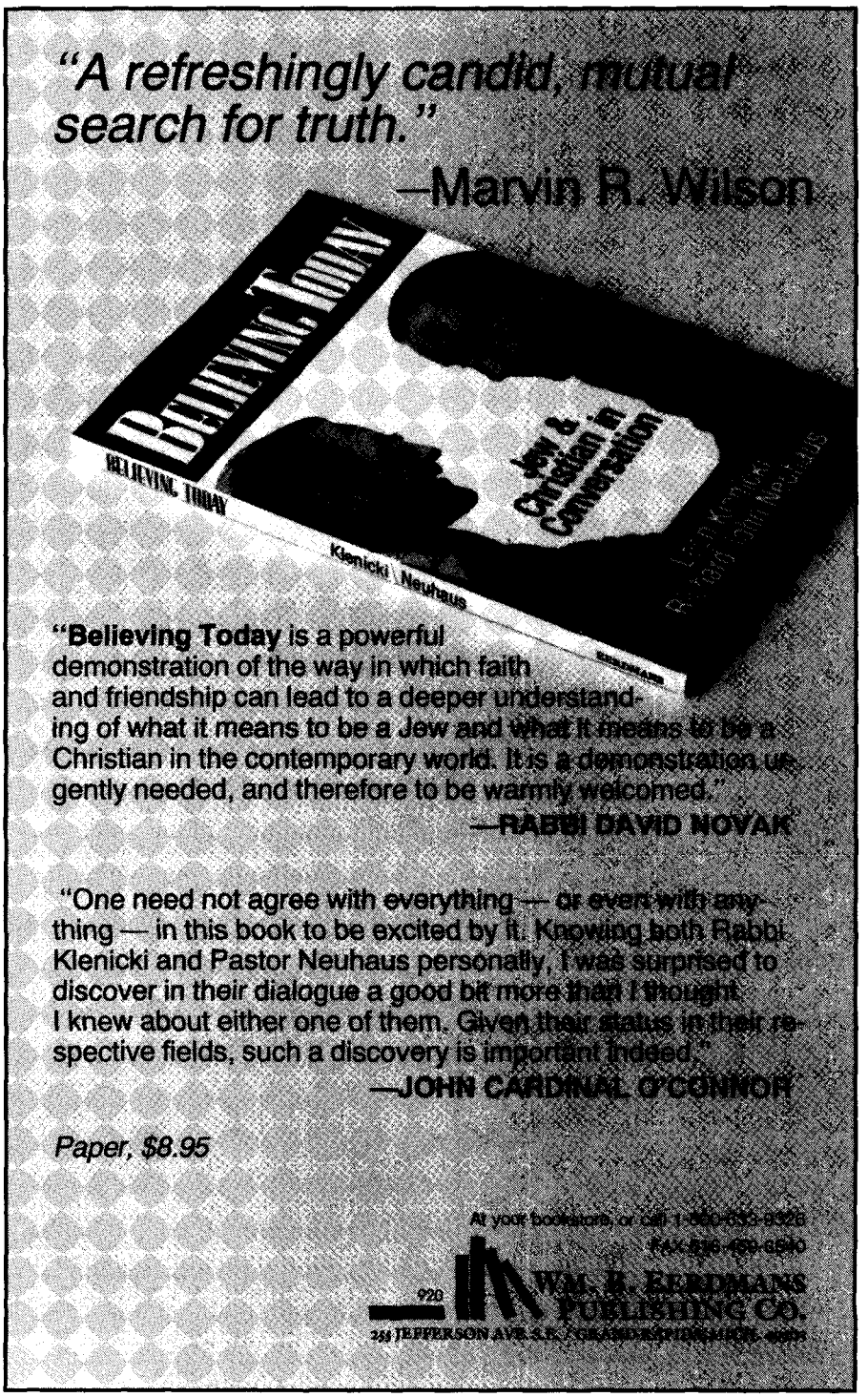
chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might choose to impress upon it." It may be no more (and no less) true that the elimination of poverty is "open to public choice" than that traffic accidents continue to occur in our land only "because we consent to it." The relevant truth is that we do not know how to eliminate poverty *or* traffic accidents at costs acceptable to those whose behavior we must affect, which means in fact that we do not know how to eliminate them at all. In the case of poverty, it is surely not sufficient for its elimination that we affect the behavior of the wealthy and powerful. In their eagerness to avoid "blaming the victim" (a valuable concept when William Ryan first promulgated it in 1971, but increasingly a cant phrase used to shut off inquiry), many advocates for the poor are refusing to face the issues that must be addressed if poverty policy is to do more good than harm.

Charles Murray is the most articulate voice insisting today that we do not know how to eliminate poverty or even reduce it substantially and that we need to rethink from the beginning what it is we can realistically hope to accomplish in this area. His first effort was *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980,* published in 1984. There Murray tried to demonstrate, with an imposing array of technical information, that the War on Poverty had eventually aggravated most of the problems it set out to solve. When the defenders of government social policies recovered from the initial impact of Murray's assault and launched their counterattack, they concentrated on his interpretation of the statistical data. That made sense. It was the hard numbers that had given the arguments of *Losing Ground* so much authority when they were first published. This unfortunately meant, however, that the larger questions Murray was raising slipped from view and went largely undiscussed.

With *In Pursuit,* Murray returns to those larger questions. What is it we really want to accomplish? What would the social world look like if we were successful? What resources are actually available to us for encouraging evolution in the direction we want to go? This time he confronts the reader less with technical and statistical data than with an invitation: "Come, let us reason together." The book offers no "knock down arguments," because Murray is determined not to bulldoze his readers but to lead them on a course of discovery. His own experiences, beginning with the Peace Corps in the 1960s and including extensive involvement in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domestic social programs, his reading, and his reflections have led him toward certain conclusions. He does not think his experiences were extraordinary or his reading esoteric, and he believes that any reader willing to reflect with him will be led in the same direction.

WHAT, then, are we after? Murray's answer: the happiness of citizens. And what is happiness? It is, he concludes at the end of a carefully-reasoned chapter, "lasting and justified satisfaction with one's life as a whole."

Now it cannot be the task of government to "make" its citizens happy. Government's responsibility at most is to provide the "enabling conditions" for the pursuit of happiness. What are those enabling conditions? Material resources would seem to be fundamental. But caution must be exercised at this point. We have grossly exaggerated the quantity of material resources essential to the pursuit of happiness while underestimating the importance of other enabling conditions. One of them is safety, which Murray interprets as the sense of living in a community dominated by lawfulness and civility. Another is self-respect, which must be grounded in a genuine acceptance of responsibility for meeting the basic standards of the community. The last is challenge that can be met and mastered in an on-going process of self-actualization. These other enabling conditions, Murray points out, are inextricably bound up with the way in which people go about obtaining material resources. A social policy, therefore, that first provides food, clothing, shelter, and medical care and only then attends to the other circumstances that permit or prevent the pursuit of happiness will undermine the social practices through which those other enabling conditions are ordinarily created.

We often trap ourselves in an engineering model when we turn to the construction of social policy, a model that can lead us to impose solutions that are no solutions at all. Murray's illustrations of this point are striking and effective. We compel people to behave in ways that they clearly do not wish to on the basis of aggregated data whose irrelevance would become obvious if we translated them into individually meaningful terms. Thus we support a reduction in the speed limit because it will "save 7,466 lives every year," though we would not do so if we recognized that such a law merely reduces the probability that an individual will die in a car accident from .0005 to .0004, a benefit too trivial to be noticed and, for any individual faced with the choice, far below the value of the additional driving time it entails.

The limitations of the engineering approach to social problems become clear as the reader follows Murray through the two chapters in which he discusses the public education system. We discover why the usual proposals for improving the quality of public education, proposals to *impose* solutions, will not succeed. We learn in concrete and vivid ways about that relative of the invisible hand, the invisible foot, which operates to prevent social designs from succeeding whenever they are inconsistent with the objectives of the individuals who must implement the design. We realize at the end that social policy can do no better (though it can do far worse) than provide conditions that will facilitate the evolution of the circumstances we wish to create. If people want a better system, they will create it, unless they are prevented from doing so; and if they do not want it, it cannot (and should not) be forced upon them.

The most important conclusion to emerge from this "queer mixture of hard data, soft data, thought experiments, and speculations" is that social policy cannot afford to ignore what Edmund Burke called "the little platoon we belong to in society." And that brings Murray back to the issue of government policy and poverty. These little platoons are not creations of the state. Effective communities are the by-products of efforts people make to overcome challenges and achieve their purposes. A key part of Murray's argument is the claim that, for people with no special skills, the enabling conditions for the pursuit of happiness must be created within and through their immediate geographic neighborhood. The alternative communities that provide a variety of options for professionals and others with high skill levels are simply not available to the ordinary unskilled person. The tragedy Murray perceives is that government policies have in a variety of ways destroyed these neighborhoods by displacing or preventing the development of the institutions that give neighborhoods warp and weft.

If Murray is correct, then we do not know how to abolish poverty in our land unless we know how to restore and nurture urban neighborhoods. Can government do this? The evidence is almost all against it. The actions of government have tended to promote the disintegration of neighborhoods, sometimes on the ground that "neighborhood" is a euphemism for racism, more regularly and consistently by the government's undertaking to do for people what neighbors ought to be doing for one another. And as urban neighborhoods disintegrate, the least skilled members of our society find themselves alone, deprived of a functioning community within which they can find safety, self-respect, and the challenges that are prerequisites for self-fulfillment and happiness.

No brief summary can do justice to the book's imaginative blending of philosophical literature and social science research, to the wealth of small insights tucked into every chapter, or to the graceful writing that carries the reader along so effortlessly. I started reading *In Pursuit* as a duty at the beginning of a long airplane flight and ended up forgetting to look at the spectacular scenery.

At the end, though, I have a

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serious disagreement with Murray: I find him much too optimistic. In calling attention to the variety of ways in which government has subverted urban neighborhoods, he completely ignores the powerful role that the market also plays in this process. It is true that urban dwellers no longer perform certain neighborly acts because government has taken over the responsibility for doing so. There are even more neighborly acts that they fail to perform, however, because it is so much more convenient to have them performed through the market. We don't have to bother our neighbors because we find the help we need in the Yellow Pages. That is an enormously liberating fact. But by liberating all of us from dependence on our neighbors, the market deprives us of the relationships that seem essential to the evolution of urban communities.

Murray observes in the last chapter that "human beings acting in a private capacity *if restrained from the use of force* have a remarkably good history" (author's emphasis). And in the same paragraph: "It is really very difficult for people—including large associations of people and huge corporations—to do anything very bad, for very long, when they are not buttressed by the threat of physical coercion." That is true. But Murray fails to point out that it can also be extremely difficult for individuals to do certain very *good* things *without* the use of coercion. This fact has undergirded the economist's case for coercion since Adam Smith stated it in the last book of his *Wealth of Nations*. There are "publick institutions" which are "in the highest degree advantageous to a great society," Smith wrote, which nonetheless will not be erected or maintained through private efforts, because private individuals will not be able to capture enough of the benefits to repay the costs of their erection and maintenance. The requisite cooperation cannot be secured because it is in each person's interest to behave like a "free rider." The urban communities that are essential to any effective anti-poverty program may be just such institutions. While they are not likely to be created by government, they may be impossible to create without government.

Charles Murray shows clearly in this book why we must abandon the myth that the federal government can fix whatever is broken in society. I do not think he has made a convincing case that the vision of Thomas Jefferson is a wholly adequate alternative. His principal achievement is to have opened up an important dialogue. If the religious communities in our society can suppress their urge to moralize, they could make important contributions to that dialogue.

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"A work of superb scholarship; it is also profoundly moving...
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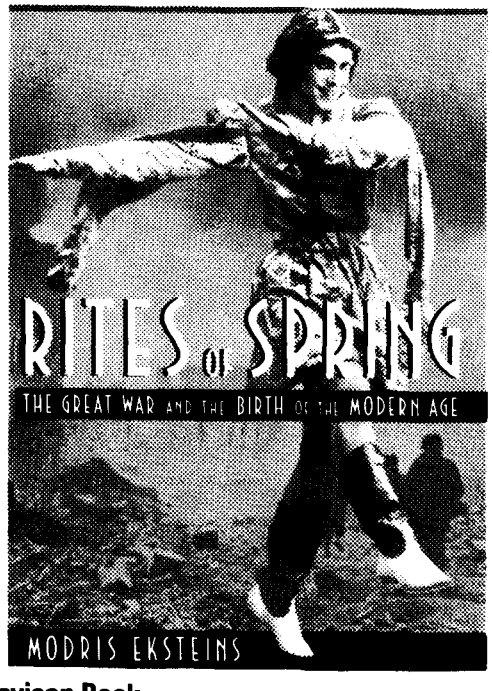
"RITES OF SPRING belongs on a bookshelf with Paul Fussell's *Great War and Modern Memory* and John Keegan's *Face of Battle*."
—CHRISTOPHER LEHMANN-HAUPT, *New York Times*



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A Peter Davison Book
Houghton Mifflin Company
2 Park Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108

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UT PICTURA POESIS

IN SIBERIA USA

The St. Jo River whirling full around
the South Bend rich and dark as a *negresse*
en chemise bedaubed with cochineal:
mauve, purple tinting the water
from the Odilon Redon sun setting.

As we drove, the sunset fell over "The Goats" in Peru, Indiana
and a crescent moon came up the color of tamarind.

By day, the steppes, the steppes, the steppes!
Mile on mile of flat corn and scattered copses
where Europeans turn into well-off peasantry.
Land! The whole shot through with vacancy.
And yet, poetry lies in a painting of merest normalcy.

Anthony Kerrigan

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Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Democratic Conservatism

A question much discussed in the last few years was what would happen to the "conservative coalition" after the Peace of Reagan. We did not have to wait long to find out. Infighting among conservatives has a venerable pedigree. Some who view the last eight years as an aberration appear delighted to resume the tradition. Others, believing that "the conservative revolution" has hardly begun, think there are more important things to do than indulge intramural squabbles.

In an earlier fight, the redoubtable Russell Kirk termed libertarians "the chirping sectaries" of the right. That may become the apt term for a little band of conservatives who declare themselves the keepers of the flame and seem to be declaring what could become a nasty little war against those whom they view as imposters. Democracy is their *bête noir,* and they vent their animus most specifically at "neoconservatives," who are variously derided as democratists, global democrats, political parasites, and ideological mercenaries. The tone of the attack is less than edifying.

Denominational tags are disputed, but the sectaries on the attack are usually called paleoconservatives—as distinct from the old right, the new right, the religious right, and, above all, the neoconservatives. "Paleos" are, in a nutshell, at war with modernity. Theirs tends to be a patrician view of republican governance conducted by men of tested genetic stock. In the way they tell it, the American story is one of almost unremitting decline. With Henry Adams a century ago and Gore Vidal today, they believe that modernity and her rapacious consorts, democracy and capitalism, have sold America into bondage to immigrant newcomers who, in their grasping vulgarity, know nothing of republican virtue. The paleos quietly seethed while Ronald Reagan championed a conservatism of democracy, capitalism, and progress, but now they're not going to take it anymore.

Beyond the paleo war against "democratism," one notes renewed attempts to invite back into the conservative movement a list of uglies that had long been consigned to the fever swamps, in large part by the efforts of William F. Buckley and his *National Review*. The list includes nativism, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, a penchant for authoritarian politics, and related diseases of the *ressentiment* that flourishes on the marginalia of American life. There will always be some who enjoy the *frisson* of flirting with forbidden bigotries once confused with conservatism. No conservative should need to be told that terms such as racism and anti-Semitism can be abused to quash the discussion of legitimate issues, but some may need to be reminded that the evils signified by such terms are not merely figments of the fevered liberal imagination.

One can understand the desire of some conservatives to have "their" movement back again, to reclaim it from those whom they view as assertive newcomers. Fortunately, most conservatives do not believe that an expanding movement is a sign of apostasy, or that arguments can only be won at the price of integrity lost. They have been persuaded that effectiveness in the defense of truth is no vice, and impotence in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. While able to accept honorable defeat, they do not think defeat is a moral imperative. Not content to grouse, they are prepared to govern.

Spanning Generations

In contrast to the chirping sectaries of a factious past, a new generation of thinkers is coming on line. They know that our society is embroiled in a great *Kulturkampf,* and the war will be won or lost on the terrain of the ideas we take to be most bindingly true. The religio-cultural battle is not the only one, but it is the most critical battle. Defining the moral symbols and truth claims by which a people lives can redefine the democratic idea to which this people is inveterately attached.

Authentic religion cannot be the servant of American democracy, or of any political order short

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of the Kingdom of God. The essential paradox is that religion is most politically potent when it debunks the pretensions of the political, keeping the City of Man under the transcendent judgment of the City of God. Thus religion's contribution to the renewal of democracy depends, first, upon the renewal of religion. This way of thinking can provide a nuanced account of democratic governance that is limited, constitutional, and accountable to what some call natural law and the common good. Happily, there are projects advancing this way of thinking underway in the worlds of Judaism, Evangelicalism, and even oldline Protestantism. Those who view these efforts as selling out to the liberal god of "democratism" lost track of the discussion some while back.

And the discussion does go back some while. In the last year much ink has been spent on the paleo-neo wars, but the lineaments of the dispute have been evident for at least three decades. Consider, for example, Will Herberg's masterful 1956 essay on Reinhold Niebuhr as a representative of the "new conservatism." Herberg noted that Niebuhr was embarrassed about being perceived as a conservative, as indeed are some who are called neoconservative today. Then much more than now, however, the embarrassment was understandable, since thirty years ago "conservatism" generally referred to positions and dispositions now associated with the "paleos."

Yet Herberg correctly saw that "the basic direction of Niebuhr's political philosophy" required the term conservative. Niebuhr had by the 1940s arrived at a decisive critique of modern political thought as that thought was grounded in the French Enlightenment. In 1944 he described the French Enlightenment as the cradle of "every error which infects a modern liberal culture in its estimate of the human situation, and of most of the errors which reached a tragic culmination in modern totalitarianism." The French Revolution, he wrote, "produced despotism in the name of liberty, civil war in the name of fraternity, and superstitious politics in the name of reason." According to Herberg, what was "new" in Niebuhr's conservatism was that it did not repudiate the core of his earlier radicalism.

Herberg wrote that Niebuhr's "prophetic radicalism implied a radical relativization of all political programs, institutions, and movements, and therefore a thoroughgoing rejection of every form of political rationalism. Add to this a renewed emphasis on the historic continuities of social life, and Niebuhr's brand of 'conservatism' emerges. It is manifestly not the conservatism of those who are called conservatives in American public life today [i.e., 1956], but it is enough apparently to establish a kinship with Burke and to give Niebuhr a prominent place in all the recent histories and anthologies of the 'new conservatism.' "

The new conservatism of 1956 is the neo-conservatism of 1990. Reinhold Niebuhr's nuanced appreciation of democracy had internalized and gone beyond the polemics against "democratism" that are still being echoed by some conservatives in 1990. As we said, these polemicists lost track of the discussion some while back.

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REAL ESTATE AND THE CUNNING OF HISTORY

Some historically minded readers may think that our address, 156 Fifth Avenue, rings a bell. That's because when this building was erected around 1894 it was called The Presbyterian Building, and it served as the national headquarters of the Northern Presbyterians. The building across 20th Street on Fifth Avenue was The Methodist Building. In fact, from the late nineteenth century through the early 1950s, most of the oldline Protestant establishment was clustered in this section of Manhattan. In 1950, when the National Council of Churches was formed from the Federal Council of Churches and seven other agencies, it was headquartered here, until the Interchurch Center (irreverently called the "God Box") was built up at 475 Riverside Drive. Later, 156 Fifth was the headquarters of the American Civil Liberties Union. It seems our institute, Religion and Public Life, is the only religiously connected tenant in the building today. We did not choose the building for its historical associations, and when we moved in we were undecided whether rites of exorcism or of rededication, or some combination of the two, were in order. While we did not choose it for those associations, and while we certainly don't want to make a big deal of it, there is the intriguing possibility that Hegel's "cunning of history" is at work. Now that it is so manifestly obvious that the National Council of Churches of late failed to bring a measure of coherence to issues of religion and public life, it is perhaps fitting that the task should be started afresh from 156 Fifth. At least we of the Institute sometimes amuse ourselves with the thought.

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CLASS AND KINGDOM

Father James Burtchaell of the University of Notre Dame is one of the wisest Christian ethicists around.

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We would say that even if he were not on our editorial advisory board. More precisely, he is on the board because he is one of the wisest Christian ethicists around. That wisdom is finely displayed in his new book from Notre Dame Press, *The Giving and the Taking of Life: Essays Ethical.* Witness, for example, the essay, "How Authentically Christian is Liberation Theology?" Knowing that it is still a young movement and frequently issues from experiences of unquestionable human suffering, Burtchaell examines liberation theology sympathetically. As a service to thinkers of that school, he lucidly sets forth his several misgivings. There are the problems of "the canonization of the poor," of the misuse of the Old Testament paradigms of liberation, of a social agenda narrowed on a specific notion of "justice," and of equating salvation with sociopolitical change.

The idea of "the preferential option for the poor" is now deeply entrenched, and Burtchaell recognizes that it can be construed in a manner that is at one with the Christian tradition. After examining key texts of the liberation theology school, however, he concludes that "the preferential option for the poor" is misconstrued to result in the "canonization of the poor." At the hands of the liberationists, the poor become the Gospel but are not themselves addressed by the Gospel. Burtchaell writes: "There are serious difficulties in the notion that the Gospel call to conversion is withheld from the poor, for the reason that their miseries have exempted them from the struggle between sin and grace. What could be more bourgeois than to declare the poor to be so subhuman that they live beyond the reach of the universal undertow of lust and jealousy and greed and anger and sloth and pride? Is one to imagine that they are therefore not offered forgiveness and transformation in Christ? Are the best tidings Christians can announce to the poor only that they will eventually be poor no longer, and that their oppressors have been marked down for destruction? Are they—and they alone—not to be summoned to forgive their oppressors as Jesus did his, or to appeal to those oppressors that they be converted and live? What could be more patronizing?"

Burtchaell concludes, with a note of sadness: "The teaching of liberation theology, in the way it deals with oppressors and oppressed, moves off in a direction which the Gospel cannot follow. By treating the oppressed as aliens to moral struggle, not needing to be called into the kingdom by faith, transformation, and service, and by promising them an inheritance primarily enclosed within socioeconomic and political terms, it seems to treat the poor in a condescending way. By its tendency to consider oppressors as adversaries rather than as fellow-sinners in dire need of rescue, it speaks more of secular class warfare than of the struggle for the Christian kingdom."

Of course the yet deeper sadness is that many proponents of liberation theology dispute the very distinction between class struggle and the kingdom. Their point is that the class struggle *is* the struggle for the kingdom, that social, economic, and political liberation *is* what the Bible means by salvation. Little wonder that some theologians have suggested that liberation theology fits the kind of thing Paul had in mind when he warned the Galatians against accepting "another Gospel."

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INTERRELIGIOUS BRINKMANSHIP

Now that passions have subsided somewhat, it is perhaps possible to get a better view of the furor over the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. For a while there, it seemed that some Christians and Jews were, to use John Foster Dulles' phrase, going to the brink, ready to jeopardize everything that had been achieved in a quarter-century of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Escalating nastiness was taken as license for the venting of sentiments that, for good reason, had for some time been deemed to be beyond the pale. A noted Jewish editor, protesting Christian symbols at Auschwitz, opined on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* that the shadow of the cross there was "sickening." A Christian columnist responded that he was sickened by the arrogance of Jews who routinely trash Christianity while "screaming anti-Semitism" at the slightest criticism of Jews or Judaism. And so it went for several unedifying months.

Some Christians, reproached for their intemperance, reacted by claiming that there was little temperance on "the other side," which does not strike us as a very Christian reaction. In addition, the claim was not true. Among quite a few voices of calm and reason one might cite, consider Michael Wyschogrod's words at a time when the controversy was still raging. Wyschogrod is a leading Jewish thinker and professor of philosophy at City University of New York. Writing in *Sh'ma,* he asked "Was this fight necessary?" His answer: "I am not sure it was. Once an agreement was signed to move the convent, it was difficult not to insist that it be honored. But should Jews initially have made such a big issue of the Auschwitz convent?"

He notes that, while nobody knows the exact numbers, the evidence indicates that the majority of those murdered at Auschwitz were Jews. "But," he continues, "it is also clear that a large number of non-Jews were murdered in Auschwitz. 200,000 non-Jews at the very least and possibly as many as 1,600,000. This being the case, it does not seem reasonable to me to demand that there be no Christian symbols at Auschwitz. For many years Dachau has had three

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chapels, one Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jewish, near each other, each displaying its symbols without anyone having objected to this arrangement. In fact, there is also a Catholic monastery adjacent to the Dachau camp and I have never heard anyone objecting to it." Wyschogrod wonders whose purposes were served by the furor over the convent at Auschwitz. "In light of the magnitude of what happened at Auschwitz, is it possible that the survivors or the relatives and friends of the survivors now quarrel over the site? Are the Nazis not laughing from hell? Need we give them this satisfaction? Is all this not diverting attention from the perpetrators, those who invented and created Auschwitz and, in so doing, are forcing us to rethink our conception of what human beings can do?"

Wyschogrod sympathetically discusses why Jews are made nervous by Christian symbols, and especially by the cross, and he has harsh words for a speech by Cardinal Glemp, the Polish primate, which "was replete with crass anti-Semitic stereotypes." At the same time, he asks his readers to understand why the statement by Prime Minister Shamir of Israel that Poles imbibe anti-Semitism with their mothers' milk "played very badly in Poland." The problem is that "many Jews are convinced that Poles are incurably anti-Semitic and many Poles are convinced that Jews are incurably anti-Polish." All that said, Wyschogrod ends on a cautiously hopeful note: "Nevertheless, we must not forget the progress that has been made. To a large degree, the recent difficulties are a measure of that progress. We simply expect much more of each other than we did in the past. The Polish church is just beginning its dialogue with Judaism. It is a dialogue in need of particular attention."

A few months later and it seems that everyone—well, almost everyone—has pulled back from the brink, recognizing what is at stake. What is at stake is not simply civility between Jews and Christians, as important as that is, but the much greater risk of offending against God's mysterious and sometimes mystifying way of entangling us with one another in the unfolding of his saving purpose.

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AUDACIOUS UNORIGINALITY

Thomas C. Oden, Methodist professor of theology at Drew University, is doing an audacious thing. He is writing a three-volume systematic theology which, by most determined resolve, is not the theology of Thomas Oden. The first volume, *The Living God* (Harper & Row, 432 pp., $29.95), came out last year, and the second, *The Word of Life* (583 pp., $32.95), has just arrived. In the preface to Volume I Oden writes, "Some may think it mildly amusing that the only claim I make is that there is nothing whatever original in these pages." In our cultural climate that may seem like a very original idea. But for most of the two millenia of Christianity the great theologians had no doubt that their obligation was not to be original but faithfully and persuasively to transmit "the faith once delivered to the saints."

Oden attempts to convey the received tradition of the community of faith—what Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and those in the Reformation communions have embraced as "orthodox" Christianity. In this he succeeds admirably. Some may suspect that Oden is unpretentious to a fault, but we find his approach entirely winning. Every page is loaded with references to the classic literature, especially to Scripture, the patristic era, and the early ecumenical councils. Oden is fully conversant with theology of the last century or two, as other references make clear, but he is inclined to the view that more recent theology is not nearly so interesting or original as many of its champions have claimed. Paul, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, and Luther anticipated most of what is true and what is false in theology of the modern era.

In short, Oden's project is anti-trendiness with a vengeance. "Modernity," he writes, "presents no tougher a set of challenges to Christianity than did the fall of Rome, the collapse of the medieval synthesis, the breakup of the unity of Christendom in the sixteenth century, or the Enlightenment. Modern theology must be written amid the breakup of modernity." While that assertion is refreshingly bold, it may meet with a measure of skepticism also among orthodox Christians. The philosophical radicalness of some forms of modernity's negation of "the meaning of meaning," it may plausibly be argued, has little or no precedence. But this is to risk a quibbling that might obscure the interest of Oden's intention and the extent of his achievement.

The achievement is in giving a convincing answer to the question, Is there such a reality as Christian theology? Today that question typically elicits evasions and equivocations about how there are many Christian theologies—Eastern, Western, denominational, liberationist, process, feminist, and on and on. Cognizant of the varieties, Oden is engaged in the perennial and necessary task of uniting without confusing and distinguishing without separating. Another way of putting it is that Oden is trying to reestablish the canon or, perhaps better, to recall our attention to the established canon that is under attack from numerous quarters.

His enterprise is closely related to the larger cultural question about whether or not there is a civilizational canon, whether there is a reality called "Western culture" which we think we are in some sense obliged to sustain and transmit to successor generations. In

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various academic disciplines, not limited to history and literary criticism, the currently prevailing wisdom answers that question in the negative. As the protesting students at Stanford put it a while back, "Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho/Western Culture Got to Go!" People like Tom Oden don't think Western culture, or the Christian tradition that is the core of Western culture, got to go. But, if they cannot convince others of the worth of the tradition, they minimally insist that people should know something about the tradition that they are so recklessly consigning to the dustbin of history.

In today's academy those who so insist are frequently condemned as advocates of DEWM—the thought of "dead European white men." In fact, Oden makes a point of lifting up the contributions of African thought, especially in early Christianity, and emphasizes theologians who were women throughout the two millennia. That said, however, he refuses to be intimidated by fashionable charges of elitism, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, etc. Christian theology, he points out, has a history, it *is* a history, it is *there,* we are not just making it up as we go along, and it is Oden's intention to present that theology, DEWM and all. What we decide to do with it or about it is something else. Obviously, Thomas Oden wants us to embrace and extend the living tradition of faith in the living God. But, whether or not one is so led, any reader who aspires to being learned has reason to consider getting these volumes for the library. They are not the canon, but they are a reliable guide to the canon.

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On Jesuit Education

Some 900 people attended "Assembly '89: Jesuit Ministry in Higher Education," which was held at Georgetown University. They were addressed by Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, superior general of the Jesuits. Reports on the meeting gave the impression that he spent his time indulging loquacious generalities about "the option for the poor," "the global village," and the need to promote "justice," "values," and other presumably good things. The loquaciousness cannot be denied, and the "black pope" does betray a penchant for inoffensive vacuities. (Since when, for instance, are Jesuits, or Christians, for that matter, committed to "values" rather than truths?) Nonetheless, his message was more substantive and pointed than some of his Jesuit hearers may have wanted to hear.

The recent statements of the Society of Jesus about the primacy of the mission to social justice, Kolvenbach emphasized, definitely do not mean that Jesuits are downplaying the importance of higher education. In calling for a "holistic" (ugh) approach to the society's mission, he seemed to be saying that the politicizing of that mission under the rubric of justice must be redressed by accenting other imperatives as well. Colleges and universities that describe themselves as Jesuit or "in the Jesuit tradition" should pay more attention to truth in advertising, he suggested. The implication is that theology and philosophy should play a stronger role in the interdisciplinary mix of such schools. He underscored that what happens in America would have wide ramifications elsewhere. With respect to education and much else, he said, "Like it or not, the United States is the world's laboratory."

At the center of Father Kolvenbach's address was this assertion of what is required of a school that calls itself Jesuit: "In a Jesuit college or university the knowledge of the whole of reality remains incomplete and to that extent untrue, without the knowledge of the humanizing incarnation of God in Christ and the divinizing of men and women by the gift of the Spirit. Transfiguration of Christ by the power of the Spirit is part of human reality itself. This transfiguration, which continues among us, saves us even as it calls us to integrate all learning and all science. It is this transfiguration which makes the work of a Jesuit university a project and an adventure that is both human and divine; one which proclaims that in spite of the prodigious diversity of technologies and the centrifugal forces at work in many areas of learning, the idea of a university, which is the integral realization of the human person, is revealed to us as possible."

In sum, those who say that the superior general didn't say much at Georgetown probably were not listening very carefully.

FT

Restorative Justice

It will soon be twenty years since Charles (Chuck) Colson was in the headlines for his part in the Watergate scandal that brought down the presidency of Richard Nixon. Before a recent meeting where your editor was to introduce Mr. Colson, he was asked by a bright young woman, "That guy over there, isn't that Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship?" It is no little thing that many thousands of people today identify Colson not with Watergate but with the ministry of Prison Fellowship. After a patently authentic conversion experience, Colson launched PF in an effort to address some of the pathologies he had

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witnessed firsthand while he was imprisoned.

Today PF is an international organization with hundreds of staff people based in Virginia just outside the Washington beltway. Its primary work in prisons is to preach the Gospel, build character, and provide a sustaining fellowship for prisoners determined to live new and constructive lives. PF is also intensively involved, however, in "prison reform," a project usually associated with sentimentalists who operate on assumptions dramatically different from those of PF. Colson believes that the fear of politicians that they will be viewed as "soft on crime" has stymied an honest debate about a prison system that destructively incarcerates hundreds of thousands of people who are reinforced in the way of life that brought them to prison in the first place.

Now, with Daniel Van Ness of PF, Colson has issued an accessible little book deserving of wide attention, *Convicted: New Hope for Ending America's Crime Crisis* (Crossway Books, Westchester, IL 60154). The argument, which may sound deceptively simple, is for "restorative justice." Restorative justice is based on three principles: (1) crime causes injuries that must be repaired; (2) all parties affected by crime should be included in the response to crime; and (3) government and local communities must play cooperative roles. The first principle includes the understanding that the injury done in crime is not chiefly against the state or the society but against other persons who are the victims. The second principle requires that victims be included in the trial, sentencing, and restoration process, while the third principle lifts up the critical role of churches in helping criminals to become contributing members of the community. Colson's understanding of crime, character, and responsibility is thoroughly biblical and conservative, but even those who do not share his deepest convictions have reason to welcome *Convicted* as an imaginative proposal for getting beyond the sterile polarities of "permissiveness" and "law-and-order" in thinking about the criminal justice system.

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McCarthyism and Theology

John May, Archbishop of St. Louis and then president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, addressed the convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America meeting in his city. Screwing up his courage, he told them in no uncertain terms exactly what they wanted to hear. Theologians are being outrageously and unjustly criticized, he asserted. "There are too many sweeping accusations leveled at the theological soundness and credal fidelity of the theologians," he declared. "There are too many vague but insistent attacks, telling bishops that the theologians will supplant them in their teaching office or ignore their pastoral guidance or lead the people of God into antagonism, division, and virtual schism." The Archbishop doesn't say how many is too many, but he is distressed and he is, perhaps predictably, reminded of McCarthyism. "To assess these warnings and general threats is like attempting to pin down allegations that flourished and destroyed so many during the McCarthy period."

Far from being "sweeping" and "vague," it seems that anxieties about the Roman Catholic theological scene are being expressed in remarkably specific terms. There are numerous theologians who proclaim that they are doing precisely what May says they are falsely accused of doing. It is hard to come up with any other interpretation of, for instance, Philip Kaufman's book of a few months ago, *Why You Can Disagree and Remain a Faithful Catholic*. In the introduction the noted ethicist, Father Richard McCormick of Notre Dame, writes that "Kaufman knows very well that there are powerful forces at work in the church attempting to reduce the reflections in his book to 'isolated speculation.' " Far from being isolated speculation, McCormick wants it understood that Kaufman's arguments on sexual morality represent an alternative to the official church teaching which, he says, "stumbles at the bar of experience and ideas." At the St. Louis meeting, Archbishop May was cheered for saying that theologians are maliciously charged with doing exactly what some of those same cheering theologians adamantly insist that they are doing. It is all very curious.

One may be forgiven for wondering whether some bishops really want to know what is happening. And the wonderment is by no means limited to the Catholic scene. May complains, "The [offending] theologians are not named, their works are not cited, the offending passages are not quoted." If critics don't name names, it is McCarthyism; if they do name names, it is also McCarthyism. Every week, from the far left of center, the *National Catholic Reporter* names the names of prelates who are allegedly violating what May depicts as the cordial relationship between theologians and the hierarchy. From the far right of center, *The Wanderer* renders a similar service by naming names of theologians who are, in its view, at war with official teaching. Then there are eminently balanced sources such as George Weigel's recent *Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy*. Nobody reading Weigel's richly documented analysis can entertain a reasonable doubt that there is something very much like a crisis in the relationship between contemporary Catholic theology and the magisterium, or teaching authority, exercised by the bishops.

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Archbishop May surely reads and therefore knows these things. Perhaps his complaisantly reassuring words about the Catholic theological situation were due to his being carried away by his role as bishop of the convention's host city. The temptation to pander is an ever present temptation, and there are few among us who do not succumb from time to time. Leaders in all the churches, however, would be more helpful if they stopped making sweeping accusations about sweeping accusations and respectfully engaged the arguments that are being joined. Patting theologians on the head and saying that all is well is another way of saying that theology is not very important. The odd thing in this instance is that the Catholic Theological Society of America apparently took that as a compliment.

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Reconstituting the Religious and Civil Orders

Ecumenism, the search for more visible unity among Christians, strikes many people as being far removed from questions having to do with public life. It is, in their view, strictly an internal matter of relations within the Christian community. Ecumenism, however, also addresses religion's role in the public arena. It was the bloody disunity of Christians—especially during the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—that convinced many thinkers that religion is of necessity a divisive force that threatens the civil order. Today's concern for ecumenism—and also for a more deeply grounded relationship between Christians and Jews—is, in part, an exploration of the possibility that religion can be a unifying force, providing meaning and hope for a public order that is dangerously short of both.

In the West the most important division between Christians stems from the Reformation of the sixteenth century (or, as others would have it, from the papal reaction to the Reformers' protest against the corruptions of Rome). The "breach of the sixteenth century" began between Lutherans and Rome, and it is therefore understandable that ecumenists pay particular attention to that relationship when looking for signs that the breach may now be healing. They were looking very carefully when, last June, John Paul II visited Scandinavia. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland are overwhelmingly Lutheran, at least nominally. In fact, participation in the churches is depressingly low, as is also the case with some nominally Roman Catholic countries to the south. Since there are relatively few Catholics in Scandinavia, a large part of John Paul's trip was paying a visit to the Lutherans. Trained in the customs of more than 450 years of hostility to Rome, some of the Lutheran bishops were churlish enough to note publicly that the Pope had invited himself. Others among their episcopal graces showed more grace. As did John Paul.

In Denmark the bishops decided that the people were not ready to put up with a pope speaking in the historic Roskilde Cathedral. So, after a prayer service there, John Paul was asked to address the Danish bishops in the episcopal residence next door. The Pope took it in stride, speaking as though he were in the cathedral: "This house of God also recalls [a] half-millenium characterized by conflicts between Christians of the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church." Nonetheless, he noted "with thankfulness and joy" that "we have remained joined together by the common heritage of the gift of baptismal grace and the proclamation of the Gospel by Christ, despite the bitterness that the cleavage in belief has brought forth between us and despite all the judgments that have been pronounced."

"Many see an obstacle [to our fuller unity] in the figure of Martin Luther and in the judgment of the Catholic Church of his time pronounced on many of his teachings," John Paul observed. More particularly, some Lutherans have insisted that Rome should "lift" the excommunication pronounced against Luther centuries ago. The Pope acknowledged that "the events surrounding his excommunication have opened wounds that have not healed after more than 450 years," but he then added that those wounds "cannot be healed today through a juridical act." Lutherans should not be so exercised about the excommunication, he suggested, because there is nothing Rome can do about it in any case. "According to the understanding of the Catholic Church, every excommunication terminates with the death of the person concerned, as excommunication is to be considered a measure directed against a person during his life."

The Important Thing

The important thing, according to John Paul, is that Lutherans and Catholics engage in "a common, new evaluation of the many questions that were raised by Luther and his proclamation." The Roman Catholic Church, he said, did that in the Second Vatican Council and has been doing it since. "The wish to hear the Gospel anew and to testify to it credibly, which lived also in Luther, must lead us to seek the good in others, to grant forgiveness, and to give up inherited images of enemies," the Pope asserted. Nor did he leave any doubt that Rome too needed to be forgiven. "If we do not avoid reality, then we will realize that human fault has led to the disastrous division of Christians and that our fault hinders again and again steps toward unity that are

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possible and necessary." Adopting the words of Pope Hadrian VI to the Nuremberg Parliament of 1523, John Paul stated: "Therefore, we must all honor God and humiliate ourselves before him. Every one of us must consider why he has fallen and save himself rather than be judged by God on the day of judgment."

It has not escaped the attention of ecumenical observers that, since Vatican Council II, Rome has more frequently and straightforwardly confessed its responsibility for Christian divisions than have most heirs of the Reformation. The healing of the breach of the sixteenth century depends in large part upon a readiness to acknowledge human fallibility and error. There can be no reconciliation without an ample and shared measure of humility. If, centuries after the wars of religion, the reconciliation of communities of faith is to offer hope also for peace in the civil realm, closer attention must be paid the ecumenical efforts of John Paul. He has spoken often of the need to reconstitute the religious basis of Western civilization, and that is the light in which his Scandinavian visit must be viewed. It was not simply a pastoral visit to the handful of Catholics in Scandinavia. Nor did he go there, as one Vatican official half-seriously remarked, "because he was troubled by the fact that there was a spot on the map where he had not been." Rather, as he made explicit both in Scandinavia and in his earlier visit to the Lutherans of Germany, he wants to encourage a healing reappraisal of the beginnings of the religious fissure—with the resulting cultural, moral, and political fissures—of the West. It is a program of breathtaking reach.

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SIDNEY AND THE LORD

The death of Sidney Hook some months ago has been much and deservedly remarked. Hook, who died in his 87th year, was a liberal who, because he understood and resisted the totalitarian temptation, was often taken to be a conservative. (Liberal anticommunism sounds like an oxymoron to most Americans who came of political age after the fifties.) Hook was among this century's foremost intellectual champions of democratic freedom, including the freedom of religion.

Sometimes he described himself as an atheist, at other times as an agnostic, but never as a believer. He was an old-fashioned rationalist of a type that is not so common anymore. About a year before his death, your editor was on a talk show with Sidney Hook. Hook was asked what he would say when the Lord asked him why he had not believed in Him. Hook responded, as he had often responded before, "Lord, you didn't give me enough evidence." After the show, I asked Hook what he would say if the Lord answered, "Sidney, there was evidence enough to convince a lot of people whom I did not make as smart as you, and quite a few whom I made considerably smarter." Professor Hook smiled and allowed as how he would probably say, "I was wrong, Lord. Please forgive me." What the Lord said to that we will likely find out in due course.

A large crowd gathered for a memorial service for Sidney Hook at New York University. There were many distinguished speakers, including John Bunzel, his colleague and close friend. A few years before his death, Hook had been gravely ill and, on a particularly despondent day, demanded that the doctors pull the plug and let him die. In the years after his recovery—productive years in which, among other things, he completed his marvelous autobiography, *Out of Step*—Hook wrote in defense of what he wanted done on that dark day. Bunzel was there at the time and reports that he argued with Hook that he should continue living. But Hook was adamant, until Bunzel mentioned that he had intended to bring the next day a first edition of an eighteenth century author whom Hook especially admired. Hook promptly decided that he would put off dying for one more day.

About four years later, during the last days of his final illness, Hook was drifting in and out of consciousness. A few hours before he died, says Bunzel, he woke up, looked about with a puzzled expression, and asked, "Am I still here?" One cannot help but wonder where Sidney Hook thought he might be.

Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary,* spoke at the NYU memorial. He noted that little attention had been paid by other speakers to the fact that Hook was very conscious of being a Jew. Saying that he did not think Sidney would mind, he donned his yarmulke and said *Kaddish,* the Jewish prayer of trust and mourning. That obviously divided the house, and at least one of Hook's more militantly secular admirers was heard to remark afterwards, and perhaps somewhat inconsistently, that praying at Sidney Hook's memorial was a "sacrilege." Now that he is better informed on the God question, we expect that Sidney Hook did not mind the prayer at all.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ In South Africa, it is commonly said, the clock has been at five minutes to midnight for at least fifty years. While alarmism has been frequent and undeniable,

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however, the sense of urgency, even of impending doom, cannot lightly be dismissed. This, along with much else, is the message of Michael Cassidy's *The Passing Summer: A South African Pilgrimage in the Politics of Love.* The book is published in England by Hodder & Stoughton and will soon be appearing here. Michael Cassidy is a South African by birth and the founder of Africa Enterprise, a multi-racial, continent-wide evangelistic association. A staunch opponent of apartheid, he also leads an organization devoted to "national reconciliation" among all races and factions in South Africa. To those at both radical ends of the political spectrum, Cassidy is viewed as a naive and meddlesome idealist. And it is true that Reinhold Niebuhr, for one, would have some reservations about his high hopes for "the politics of love." Yet one cannot help but admire the religiously inspired courage of Cassidy and his associates who, in a desperately polarized country, insist that the great tragedy to be feared is not that political change might go this way or that but that Christians might replace loyalty to Christ with loyalty to political faction. Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba, presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, says of *The Passing Summer,* "No racial group has been spared and with amazing objectivity we are shown ourselves as if in a mirror." Because that is the case, it is likely that Michael Cassidy will continue to be a sometimes lonely voice in a mode that deserves to be called prophetic. (For information about Cassidy, his book, and his work, write David Montague, African Enterprise, 128 East Palm, Box 727, Monrovia, CA 91016.)

■ Here's a thoughtful article by a Roman Catholic pondering the morality of capital punishment, which he favors. But on at least one point the author does seem to be straining. He recognizes that John Paul II has expressed the judgment that capital punishment should not be employed by the state, while he has also indicated that the death penalty is not unjustifiable in principle. "On this view," the author writes, "to administer the death penalty is good; to withhold it, knowing that one could administer it, is better." But he thinks this is a "high ethical ideal" that is only relevant to societies that accept the "traditional teaching of the Church" regarding the permissibility of capital punishment, which American society clearly does not. There are at least two problems with that reasoning. First, the overwhelming majority of Americans (who are the society?) do accept both the moral permissibility and the prudential advisability of the death penalty, although not necessarily because it is the "traditional teaching of the Church." Second, in his several locutions on the subject, the Pope was undoubtedly aware of social contexts when he urged states to refrain from the use of capital punishment. He has not said that it should not be used in societies where the right to use it is clearly understood. He has stated his belief that it should not be used, period. While they are considered with utmost respect, for most of us such papal statements do not settle the matter one way or another. As painful as it may be for someone who is appropriately deferential to church authority, the author of the article in question would better advance the argument by frankly acknowledging that he disagrees with the Pope (or, put more gently, that the Pope has not adequately addressed the question), and then explain why. Suggesting that the Pope has not really said what in fact he has said does not, whatever the author's intention, demonstrate respect for the papal teaching office. Nor does it recommend Roman Catholic moral reasoning to those outside that ecclesial fold.

■ Episcopalians are in a particular bother about sexual ethics. Episcopalians therefore, but not only Episcopalians, have reason to welcome *Men and Women: Sexual Ethics in Turbulent Times* (Cowley, Cambridge, MA, $10.95). Edited by Philip Turner, these essays are sure to please neither the champions of a "new ethics" attuned to the realities of "the sexual revolution" nor many of their traditionalist opponents. As Victor Preller of Princeton writes in "Sexual Ethics and the Single Life," there is an obligation to really love and really listen to "the new reformers." If we so love and listen, there is just a chance that some may be open to entertaining another view of the right ordering of our sexuality, a view rooted in Scripture, sustained by tradition, and confirmed by clear reason. (Preller's is a particularly elegant argument, even if he does get Luther wrong on our human inability to please God.) *Men and Women* is one of the more persuasive statements of historic Christian teaching on sexual ethics to have appeared in some time. It would be a helpful addition to personal and parish libraries.

■ As the abortion debate enters a new phase, a new and most welcome publication makes its appearance. It is the *Bernadell Technical Bulletin,* an eight-page newsletter edited by Dr. Bernard Nathanson that makes accessible to the layman (and the politician!) the most up-to-date medical information on the care of the unborn, abortion practice, and related developments. Gleaning more than 100 medical journals, plus textbooks, seminar proceedings, and research reports, the bulletin offers a wealth of scientific data pertinent to our understanding of the unborn and others who are often deemed to be doubtfully human. To get a sample copy, write Dr. Nathanson at PO Box 1897, NY, NY 10011.

■ New Yorkers have always gotten a good deal of their folk wisdom from cab drivers. Cabbies today are, more often than not, recent immigrants from Russia, Haiti, Afghanistan, or Cuba. On a trip uptown the other day, the cabby was a devout Sikh, and eager to talk about it. There is a community of about 20,000 Sikhs in Queens, and he was much distressed that here, as in India, most of them are not very devout. "The leaders are more interested in politics than religion,"

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said he. "When God sent us down here He said, 'Go and tell everybody about me,' but all these people do is talk politics. So when they go back God is going to be very mad. 'What's wrong with you?' He'll say. 'I sent you down to talk about me and all you did was talk about politics.' It's really that simple." Too simple? It strikes us as the simplicity of a wisdom that should be heeded, and not only by Sikhs.

Sources: "Reinhold Niebuhr: Christian Apologist to the Secular World" in *From Marxism to Judaism: Collected Essays of Will Herberg*, edited by David Dalin (Markus Wiener). Wyschogrod on Auschwitz convent controversy, October 27, 1989. Kolvenbach on Jesuit education, *Origins*, June 22, 1989. May to the theologians, *Origins*, June 22, 1989. John Paul II on Luther and ecumenism, *Origins*, June 22, 1989. "Until Death Do Us Part" by Michael Pakaluk, *Crisis*, September 1989.

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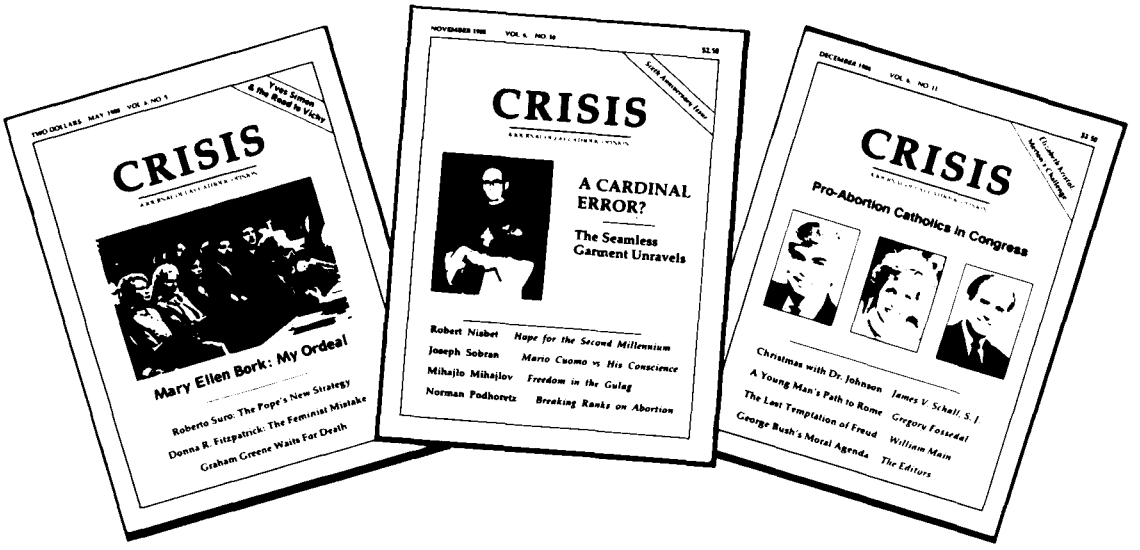
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